

CRASH

MICRO ACTION

A FUSION RETRO PUBLICATION

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**THE BEST
SPECTRUM
MAGAZINE IN
THE WORLD...**

**REVIEWS OF HAOKEN
& TUEKAS AND A
FIRST LOOK AT TARGET:
RENEGADE FOR NEXT..**

**NEWS, PREVIEWS, NICK'S HINTS
& TIPS, SIMON'S SCREENS,
INVESTIGATIONS, FEATURES, NEXT
& MORE REVIEWS THAN YOU CAN
SHAKE A RUSTY PIXEL AT!**

ZX SPECTRUM

ZX TOUCH HANDS ON

**ALL YOUR SINCLAIR NEWS
DIGITAL & PRINT**





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Happy New Year



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FUSION RETRO BOOKS





CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION



ANOTHER YEAR!

As I write this editorial it's that time between Boxing Day and New Year - a quiet time, a time to reflect.

It's been almost a year now since Roger has passed — Roger and Oli's area of rest in Ludlow has had some holly and seasonal flowering added making it suitably festive. Roger loved XMAS, and it seemed fitting to celebrate the time of year with him and Oli.



O!

A couple of days before Christmas Day we released a 1-screen demo of our game O.

We have been developing a re-usable games engine called **The Fusion Engine** over the last 6-months — O is our first game using this engine with Simon Butler on graphics, David Sonic Clarke coding and Paul Hesso with the sound and music.

We added a little challenge to the 1-screen demo — a timer with the player fastest to collect all the XMAS crackers and exit the level receiving a £100 voucher to cash in on the Fusion Retro Books store.

There were indeed 2-winners who both

incredibly escaped the room in 12 seconds - RetroSteveUK and James Dalgarno, each getting the prize. Well done guys — my best was 21 seconds. Here is a link to the game that can be run on the CSPECT emulator, or NEXT hardware:
<https://bit.ly/48ILnbe>

We will also be creating a new 3D Starstrike game on the Spectrum Next in 2024, having acquired the rights to the game from Ian Oliver of Relatime Software. Watch this space as I guess they say.

Happy New Year!

Oli Welbourn

NEWS & PREVIEW

Welcome to your festive helping of CRASH! Our two main news items have a suitably festive flavour, but elsewhere the Spectrum scene continues to bristle with life, and we've got a number of news items to shout about!

First off, many readers of this magazine would have had a particularly Merry CRASHmas, as the second wave of Spectrum Next computers finally started to hit people's doormats. Skip to page 38 for our usual round-up of all things Spec NEXT.

Elsewhere, previous CRASH Smash *Seraphima* has had a definitive version released by Zosya. This expanded and enhanced version represents the current pinnacle of what can be achieved on the Spectrum: <https://on.mom/Ctmj>



Sticking with Zosya, *The Bark* is a mod to *The Dark: Lost Pages*, which retains the



classic FPS action from the Zosya remake but now sees you facing off against a canine horde! You can get the game at:

<https://on.mom/kUoh>

Perhaps the most beloved of *Dizzy* games, *Fantasy World Dizzy* has been polished up by Andrei Titov, who has previously released similarly definitive editions of *Dizzy* and *Treasure Island Dizzy*. This is an expanded and improved release, and you can get it at:

<https://on.mom/cSZc>



THE GAME OF THE MAG



Legends of the new Spec scene, PuttyCAD & 100 Tin Soldiers, are back with a seasonal spin on their previously released game, "Lockdown Town". In this spin-off, you're tasked with delivering none other than the CRASH 2024 annual to our eager readers. Grab the game for yourself at: <https://on.mom/RQFH>

ATIC ATAC CHRISTMAS



Rebuild Santa's Sleigh and escape the Christmas Castle in this special edition of the classic Ultimate game, *Atic Atac*. Presented for free by regular Spec dev 'highriser', with graphics from Jarrod Bentley and Gabriele Amore, you can download this festive treat for yourself at:

<https://on.mom/WXGC>

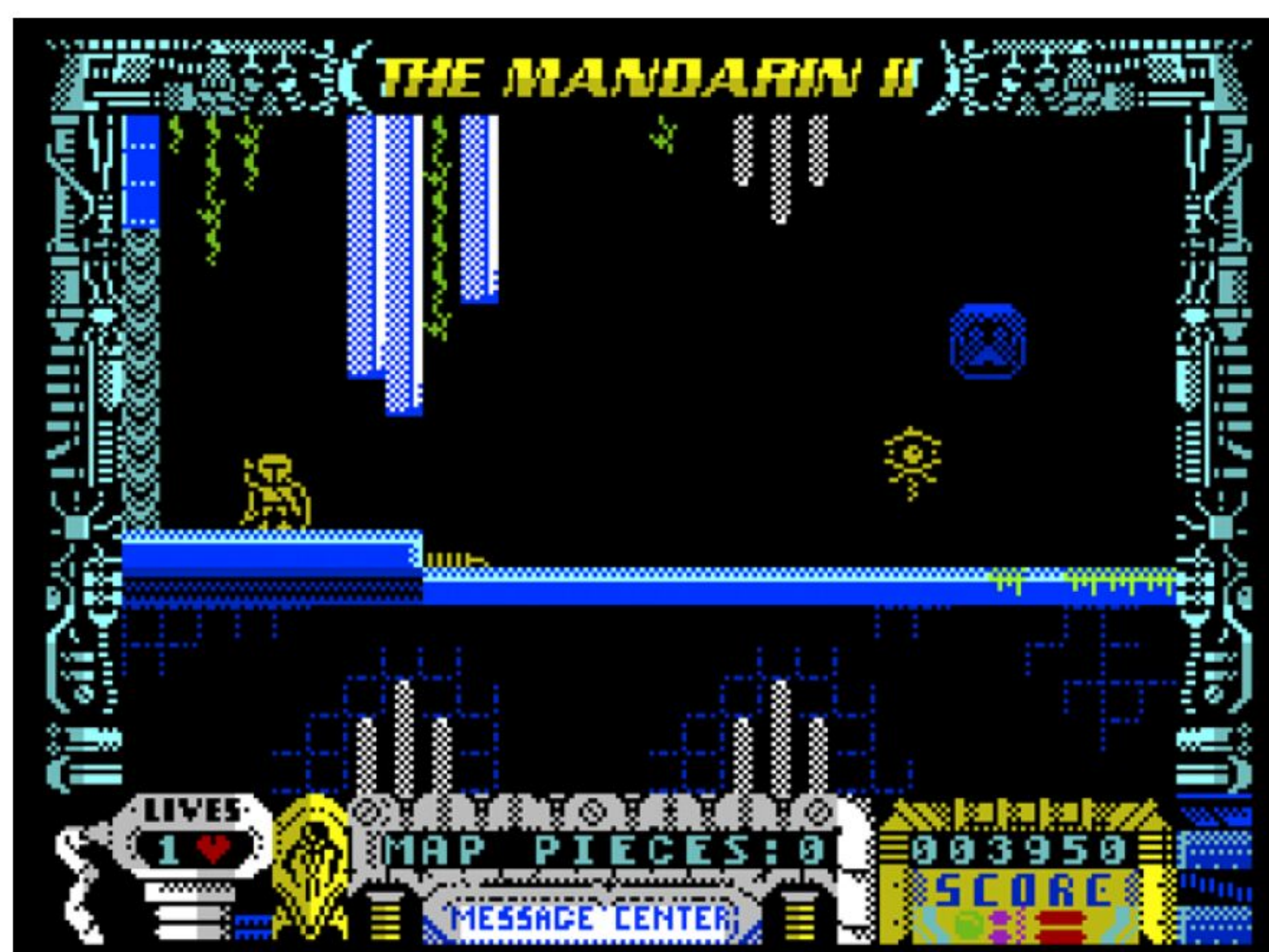
The Mandarin 2

Don't say the *Star Wars* name; that gets things shut down with I.P. disputes. Clearly, the predecessor didn't, so we are lucky enough to have a sequel. No, you don't control an orange (seasonally, it's Clementines anyway) - this

is another *Mandalorian* adventure in all but name. If you enjoy your hybrid games that merge *R-Type* style shoot 'em ups and *Dan Dare*-style platform-shooting action, this will be one for you to play to get rid of the XMAS blues.

Expect a variety of gameplay styles over the slick-looking levels.

It's out now to play, and you can expect a full review in our next issue. This is the way!



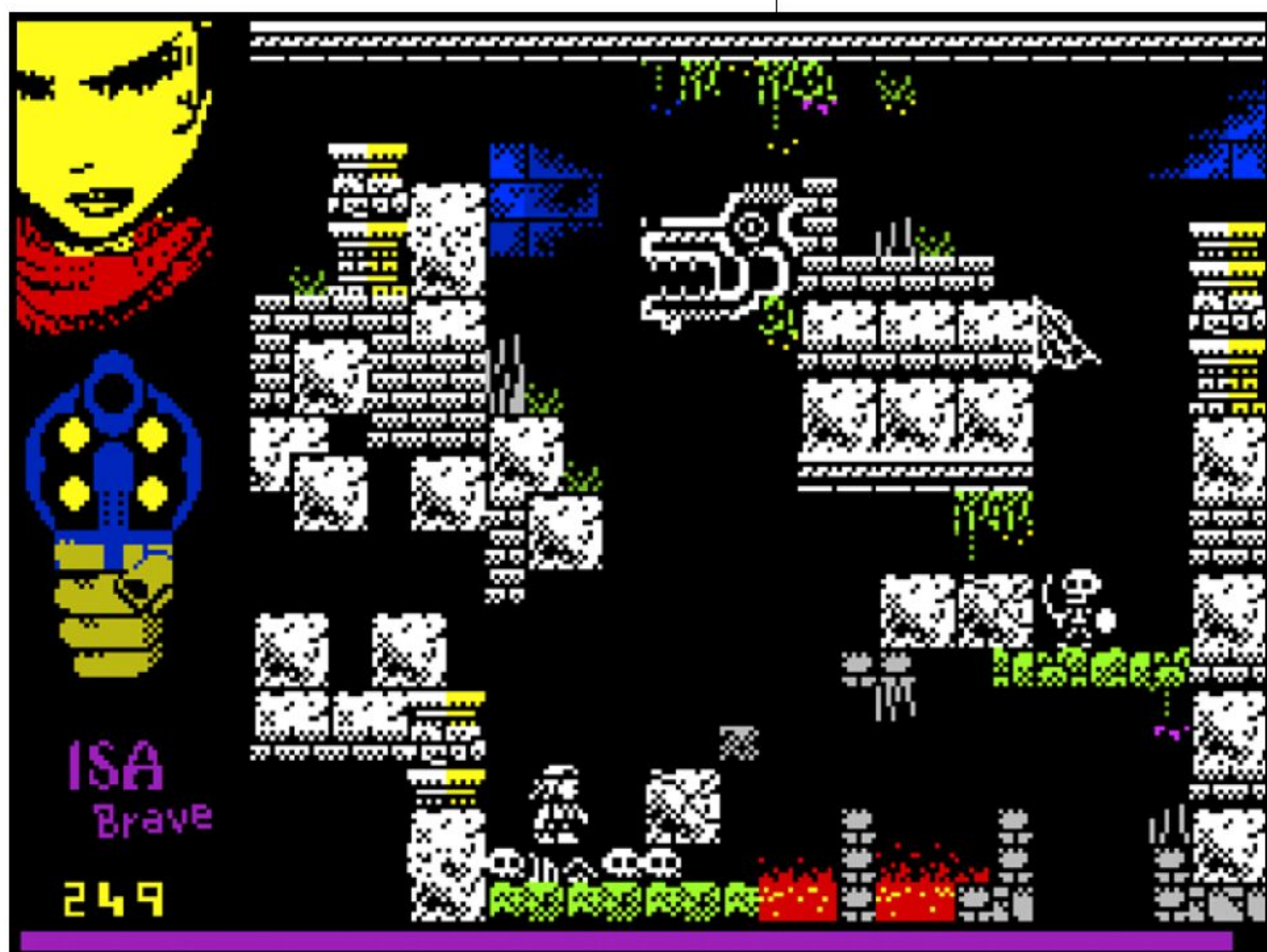
Isa Brave

If you're a hardcore gamer and like your games tough, like *Rick Dangerous* kinda tough, where you will die

countless times trying to figure out the exit of each screen, then *Isa Brave* is the game for you. Every step

poses a threat, and the player must patiently and carefully observe every step they make. Expect

crumbling blocks, slippery floors, locked doors, and very limited ammunition. The author boasts that every screen is completable without using a single bullet - good luck with this, dear readers of CRASH - we reckon you will be pushed to your limits. Even in the pre-review stage, our reviewers were rage-quitting. It's a tough gig playing games.



She's Ebenezer Brave



The Mijadore Vase



Just before going to press, this very lovely-looking platform adventure was announced. In a very Indiana Jones-like quest, our

reluctant hero must locate this mythical vase. First impressions give the vibe of a very polished and well-designed game. It looks unique, with its own visual style that makes it stand out from the crowd. We can't wait to get our teeth stuck into this and give you a proper review of it in the next issue

of CRASH. We do love a game that lets us explore tombs and catacombs.



Shovel Duck

Harking back to the days of a simple premise and inspired by budget game platformers, *Shovel Duck* invites us to explore the colourful world and collect money so that he can afford to go to a barbeque at his mate's house. As in all good platforming games, there are plenty of tricky baddies to avoid, a sense of exploration, and the novel ability to dig (once you find the shovel). From the early impressions we've gathered, this will most definitely appeal to the fans of the genre.



There are a number of NPCs who give you clues to what to do, so look out for them. The author has already hinted at a sequel, so get this fired up and played before the next adventure comes along.

The Knight Was Sick

HAOKEN



Hicks

£ DONATION • 10/2023 • 128K

DOWNLOAD: <https://on.mom/MQVY>

Haoken is a young Ninja, vying to be the future king of Sindara. To achieve his goal, he has to train and train well, learning skills along the way. The future skills in his arsenal are the ability to dash, double-jump, and, of course, get the most out of his Kitana by slashing anything that gets in his way. Speaking of things getting in the way, you'll find dancing skeletons, spooky ghosts, and terrorising...water. It's one of those things, isn't it, water? Life-giving, though also deadly. Much like my ex-wife. Anyway, enough of that. What does *Haoken* have in store?



Criticism

Three levels of Haoken await you (should you make it that far - more on that later), with the first being a training level where you collect scrolls to obtain the aforementioned skills. After collecting your final skill - the



Kitana - the enemies come alive, with the piles of skeletons lying around arising from the floor Thriller-style, as they start their march back and forth across the screen. A quick swipe of your Kitana will see their bones tumble to the ground, though only for a few seconds when they form together again to start their march once more.



Haoken keeps with Hicks' usual style - colourful scenery and big cartoon-like sprites and swift moving at that, though it has to be said, I struggle a bit with the gameplay and controls. Double-jumping and dashing I can just about get my fingers around, though when it comes to Kitana use, well, this is my downfall. To use your Kitana, you have to be moving in one direction or the other, which means you have to be spot-on with your timing and placement, or else you find yourself running into an enemy and losing vital energy. This, coupled with the fact that enemies reappear upon entering a room and also the fact that you only have one life, made it a frustrating factor for me. It took me a long, long time to get past the first 'training' level because of this, and when I got to the second, I was mentally exhausted, so trying to navigate and judge my dashes across the vines, water, and ghosts - argh! It's all too much!

- **Paul Davies**

Gordon's Take

Haoken has the potential to be an incredible game, but it is marred by a few things that make it only a good game. I like the special abilities that the main character adopts during the training level (Act 1). Still, the game had so much potential to introduce them in a more paced fashion, giving way to a bit more of a Metroidvania element to the game. As it stands, you get every ability, and each screen requires these skills from the outset. It's not bad; I just felt that the excellent work that went into developing them was wasted for a game that's more akin to a speedrunner. In saying that, the level design is excellent, and it's a tough challenge, possibly made more complicated by the fact that you can only sword-swipe when you are moving.



Comments

Haoken features nice colourful graphics and an atmospheric soundtrack, which is somewhat reminiscent of Target Renegade. The game could have been a lot more fun, but for the tricky controls which frequently frustrated me and sucked a lot of fun out of my time playing it.

Keyboard: Q,A,O,P, M

Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston

Use of Computer:	79%
Graphics:	79%
Playability:	73%
Getting started:	78%
Addictive Qualities:	75%
Overall:	74%

Speccky Quiz



Amebatron Software

£ DONATION • 07/2023 • 48K / 128K

DOWNLOAD: <https://on.mom/JXYe>



We all love a bit of a quiz, don't we? Especially if it's within our field of gaming expertise. I can't be the only one who has daydreamed about taking the hot seat on *Mastermind*, specialising in Spectrum games. While that pipe dream may never come true, we have *Speccky Quiz* to test our knowledge in such a niche but wonderful subject. So rather than a plain old question-and-answer affair that we are all so used to, *Speccky Quiz* is a mashup of a platformer and Spectrum knowledge assessment. Playing the part of an anthropomorphic rubber-keyed character, you have successfully escaped captivity from the nefarious Eugene.io (love it). The only way to fully be free is to answer the multiple choice questions on each level. The questions are displayed at the top of the screen, and the answers are collectable items. Choosing the correct answer allows for level progression, where choosing the wrong one results in a

loss of life. The player has to find the route to grab the answers while dodging the baddies and hazards. Sometimes, the 'wrong answers' present themselves as hazards as they can block the way. As you advance in the game, I wouldn't necessarily say the quiz becomes more challenging, but the platforming obstacle certainly does, especially in the later stages, which consist of multiple screens. If you're rubbish with both

quizzes and platforming, there are no pokes to help you here.

Criticism

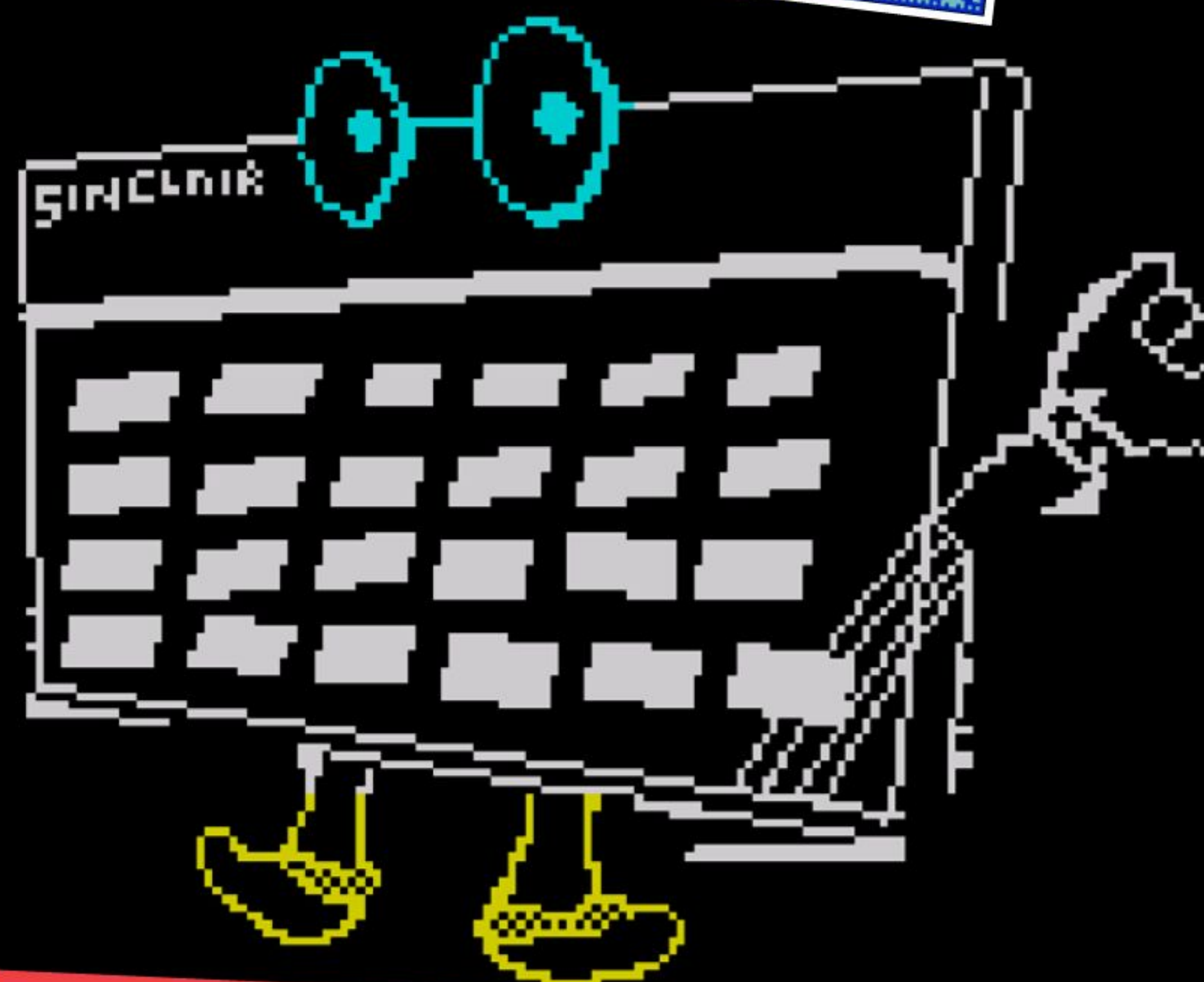
I do love to test my Speccky knowledge, so as soon as this game came onto my radar, I was keen to fire it up. I thought the concept of it being a hybrid game is rather novel and definitely offers a different take on the platforming



Paul's Take

I liked the idea of this game. Test your Speccy game knowledge at the same time as testing your platforming skills. I also liked the fact that you had some lives to sacrifice, should the question relate to a game you may not have played before or paid attention to that much.

As Gordon says, it is limited in some aspects, which lets it down heavily. It could have been so much better if just that little bit more detail had been added, but as it stands, it'll do for a quick play and challenge as you test your memory and reflexes.



Comments

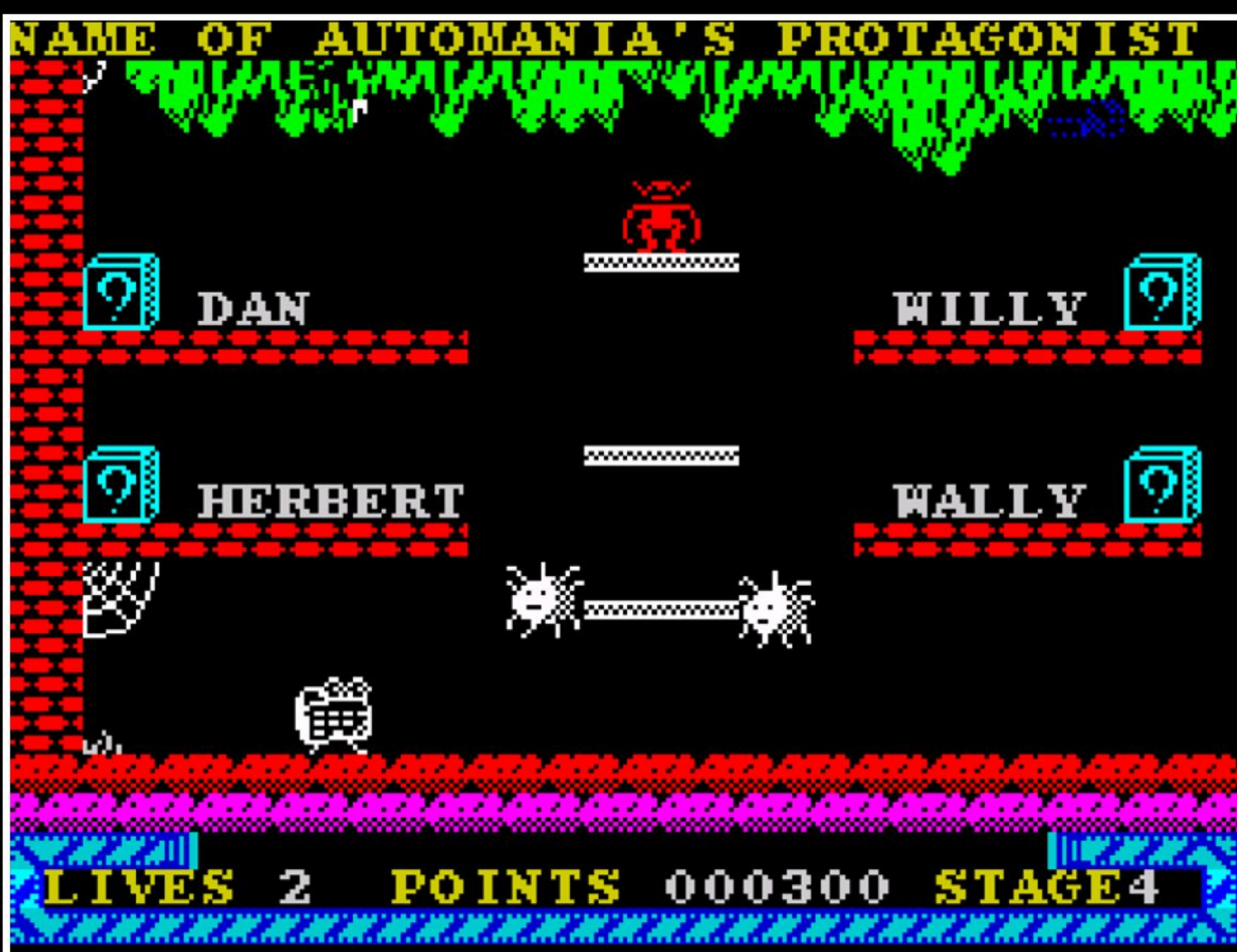
Speccy Quiz is a noble attempt at doing something a little bit different. Visually, it doesn't offer much over its peers within the platforming genre, although the music is rather good. It's hard to strike the balance between a good platformer and the right level of quiz knowledge required, but it does this reasonably well. Its biggest let-down is definitely Groundhog Day-induced questions.

Keyboard: Redefinable

Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston

Use of Computer:	70%
Graphics:	65%
Playability:	70%
Getting started:	77%
Addictive Qualities:	60%

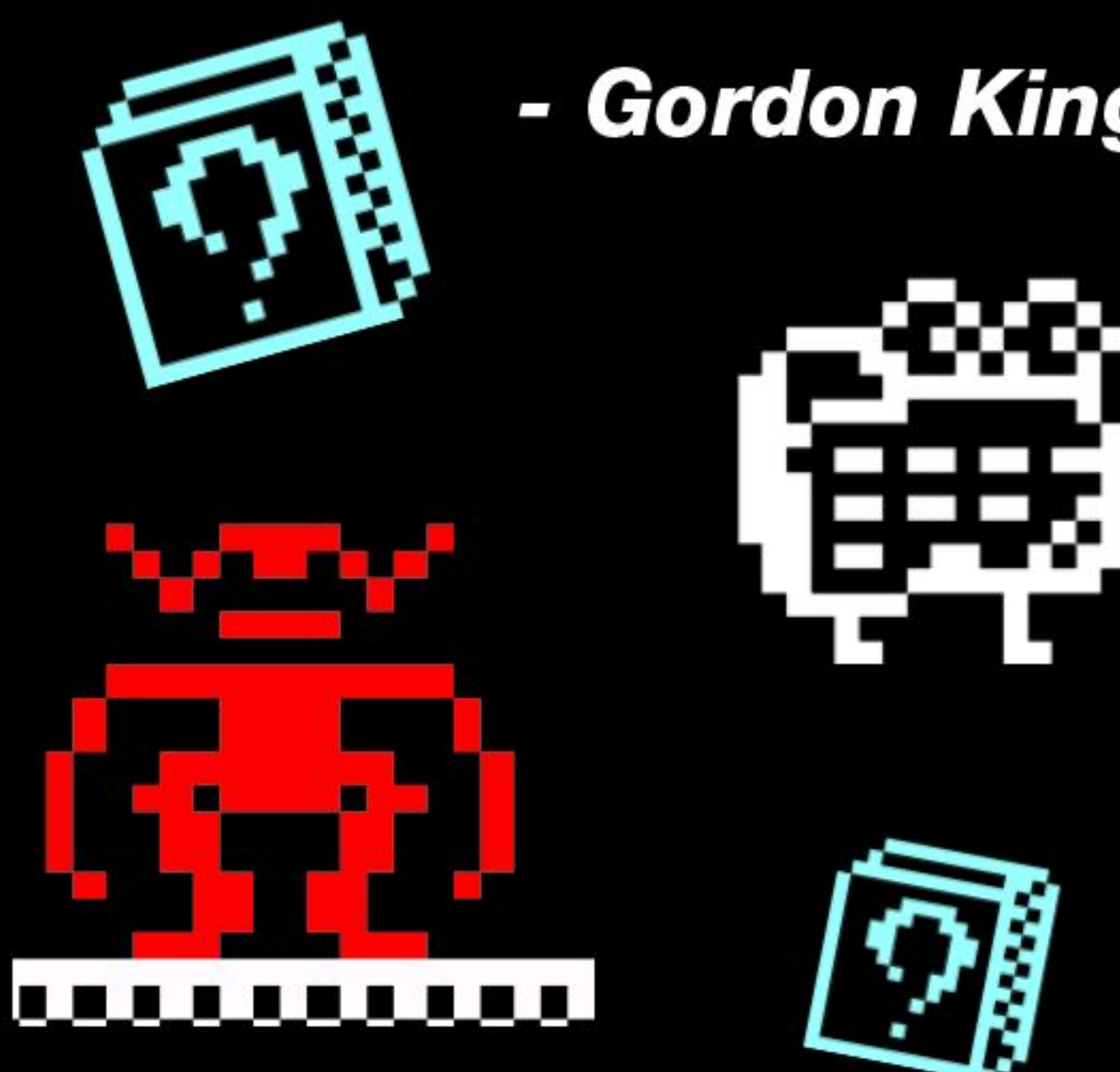
Overall: 68%



genre. The questions aren't all that difficult - and the progression of the platforming difficulty curve with each level is balanced well. However, the main issue with the game is that the questions aren't random. For example - the first level asks you the same *Manic Miner* question, and it's the same for each successive level. This negates the desire to replay the game after finishing it, as the questions take precedence, and the

platforming element is secondary to them. I'd love a revised version where there's a question library randomly selected, akin to pulling riddles out of a hat.

- Gordon King





Simon Butler's SCREEN\$

I'm tired. I've almost completed a 940 million Km circuit around the sun at 67,000 MPH, and at my age, that's no easy feat.

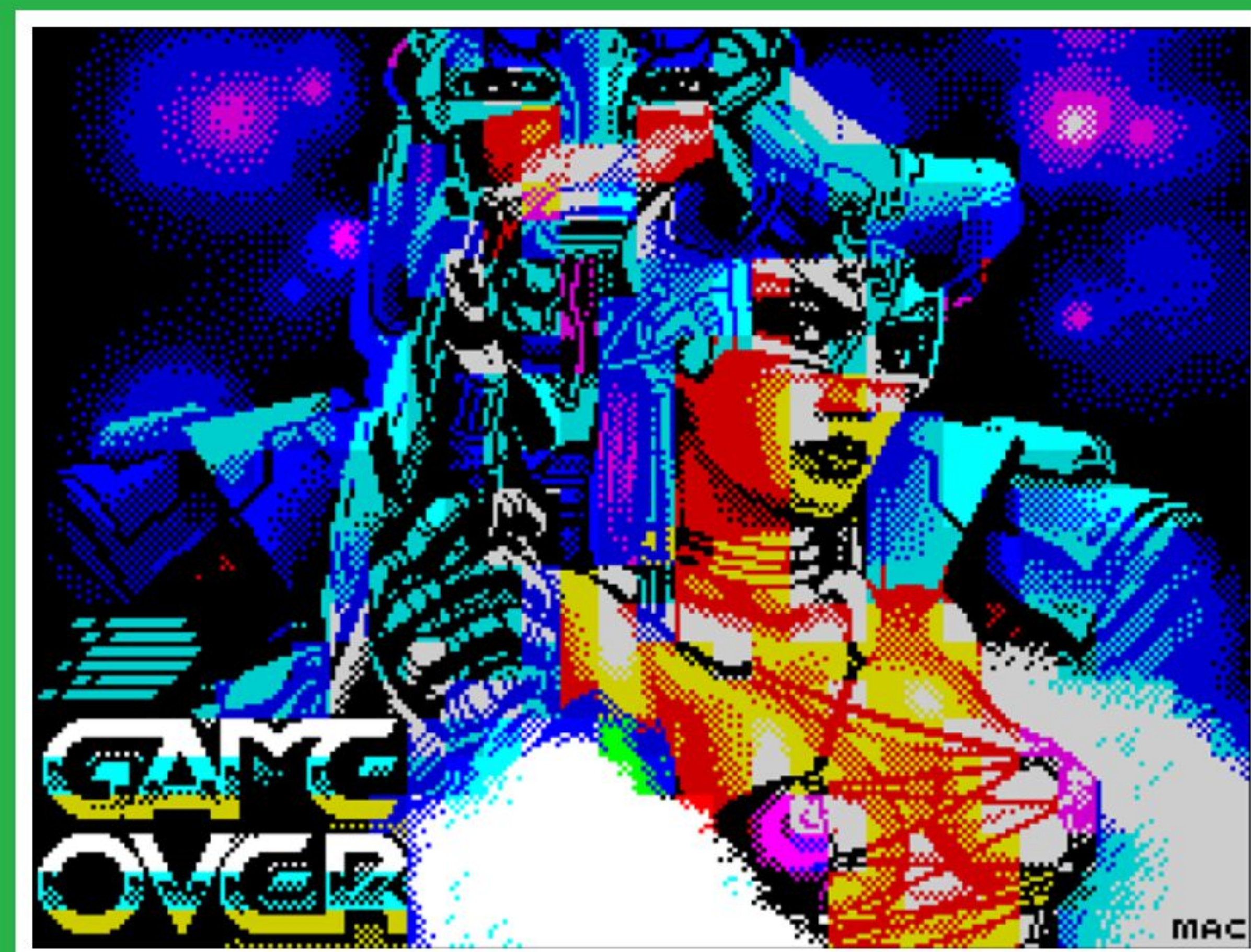
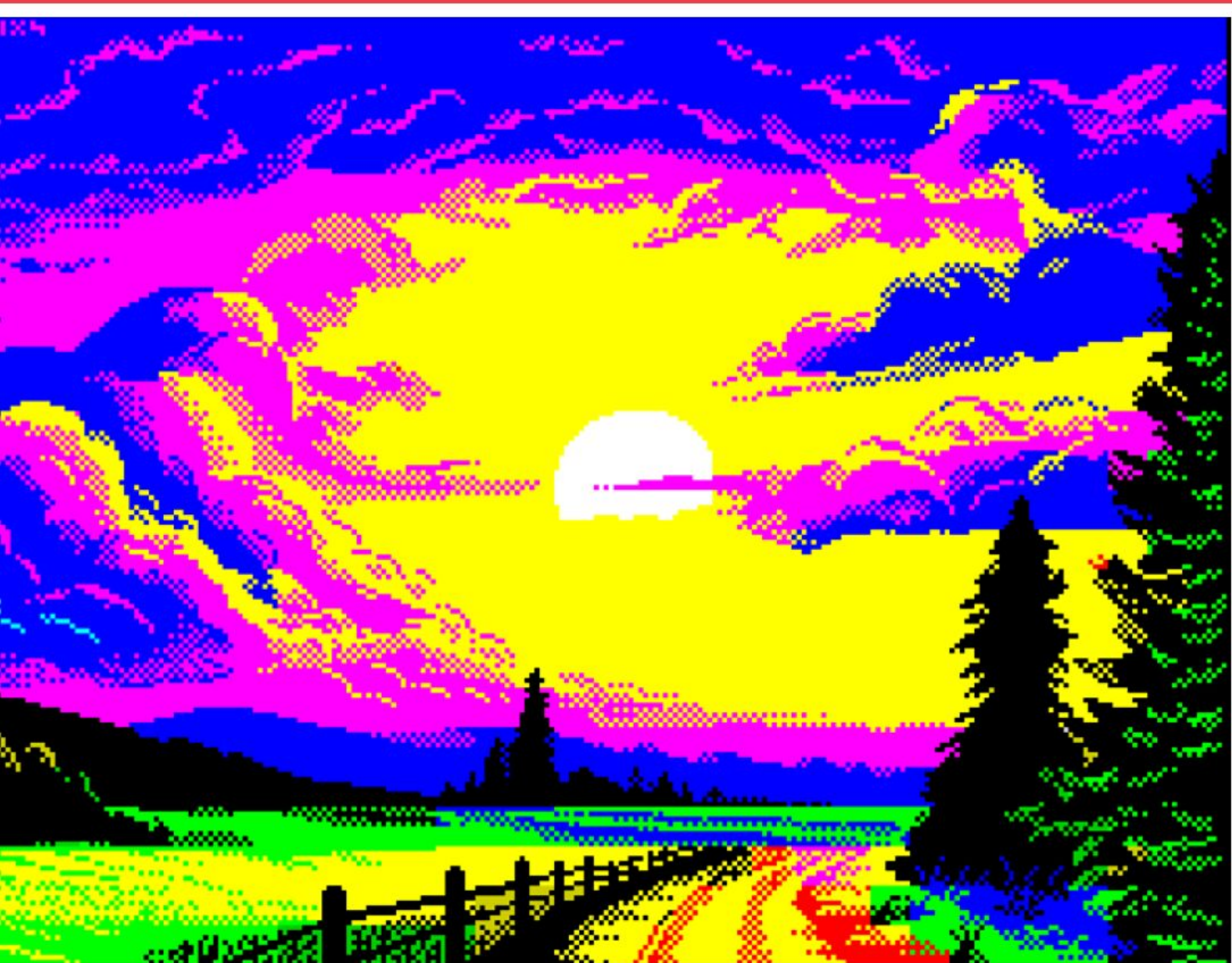
But actually, it is, because all I need to do is sit here at my desk searching for talented Spectrum artists and let the good old planet Earth do all the rushing about.

Way Home 2023: trixs

There's a naïve quality about this that grabbed me from the get-go. It's a simple image, a landscape done countless times in all media, but this is as good as any. The vastness of the sky sits heavy over a lonely road stretching off into the distance and disappearing around the trees.

A fence delineates the freedom of the road and the privacy of the land behind, and it is that freedom that is encapsulated here. The road is pulling the eye onward, calling the viewer to follow and discover what is beyond the trees.

The clouds are parting to reveal the golden orb of the sun, and all is rendered with a simplicity that suits the image perfectly. Beautiful.



Game Over 2013: MAC

It's fairly safe to say that any schoolboy from "back in the day" almost certainly spent an inordinate amount of time staring glassy-eyed at the original advert for this title, and were probably devastated when the sanitized version appeared shortly after. One of our regulars, Mac, has recreated the original in all its "offending" glory and has done so with grand style and a huge dollop of Speccy-based skill.

This is probably as close to the original as you could ever get on the Spectrum and with such a palette, but Mac knows his way around the attributes and has done the image, complete with those oh-so-shocking nipples true justice. As someone who was markedly older at that time and had seen fine examples of the real thing in the flesh, so to speak, I could never see what the fuss was all about.

But I'll sing the praises of this pert and pixelated pair all day. Bravo!

For more art and games, visit:
www.zxart.ee

I'm not saying it's easy to find amazing Spectrum examples, because it isn't. There are the regular exponents who continue

to produce brilliant work, but the appearance of new pieces does seem to be slowing. That being said, I have every

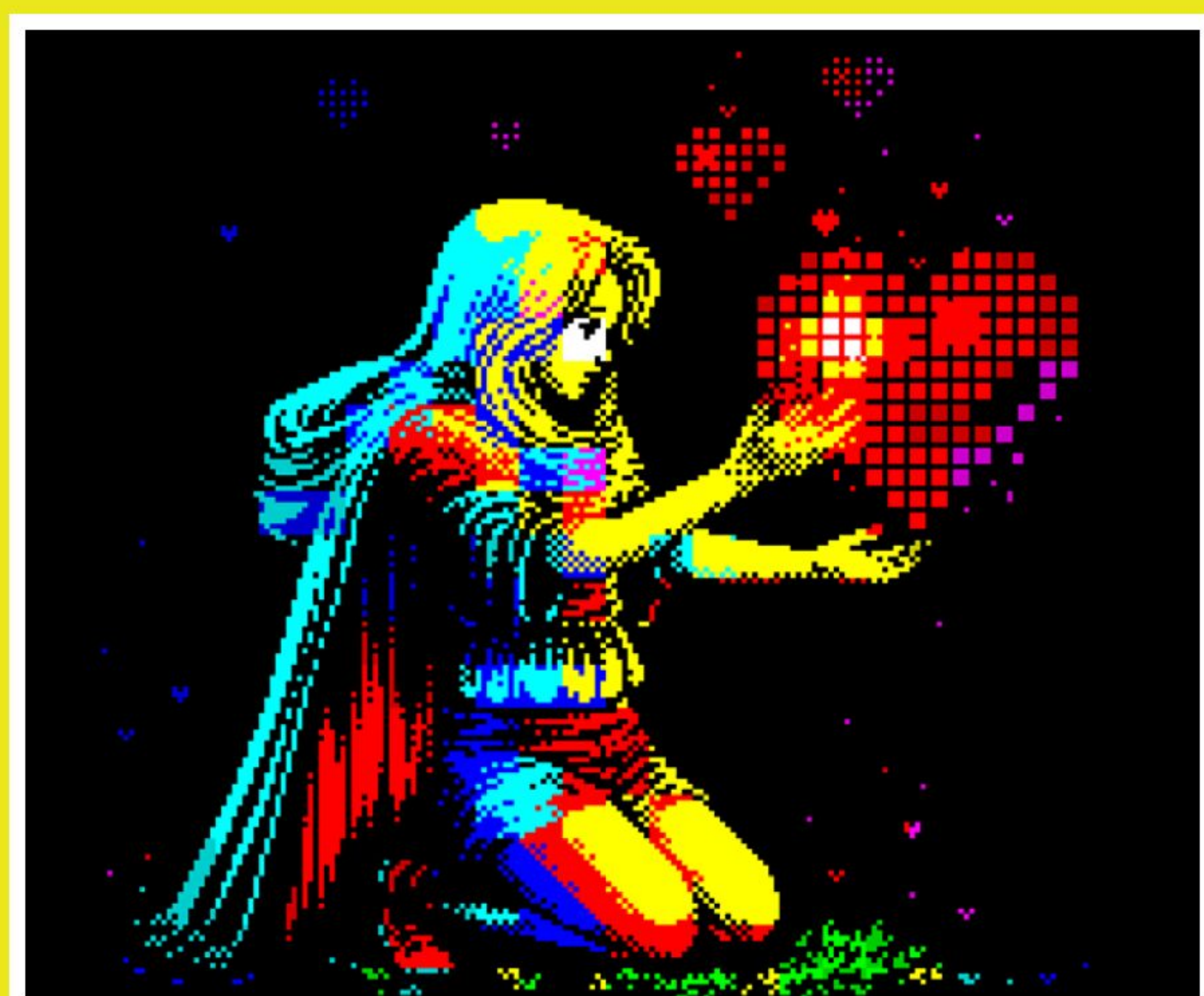
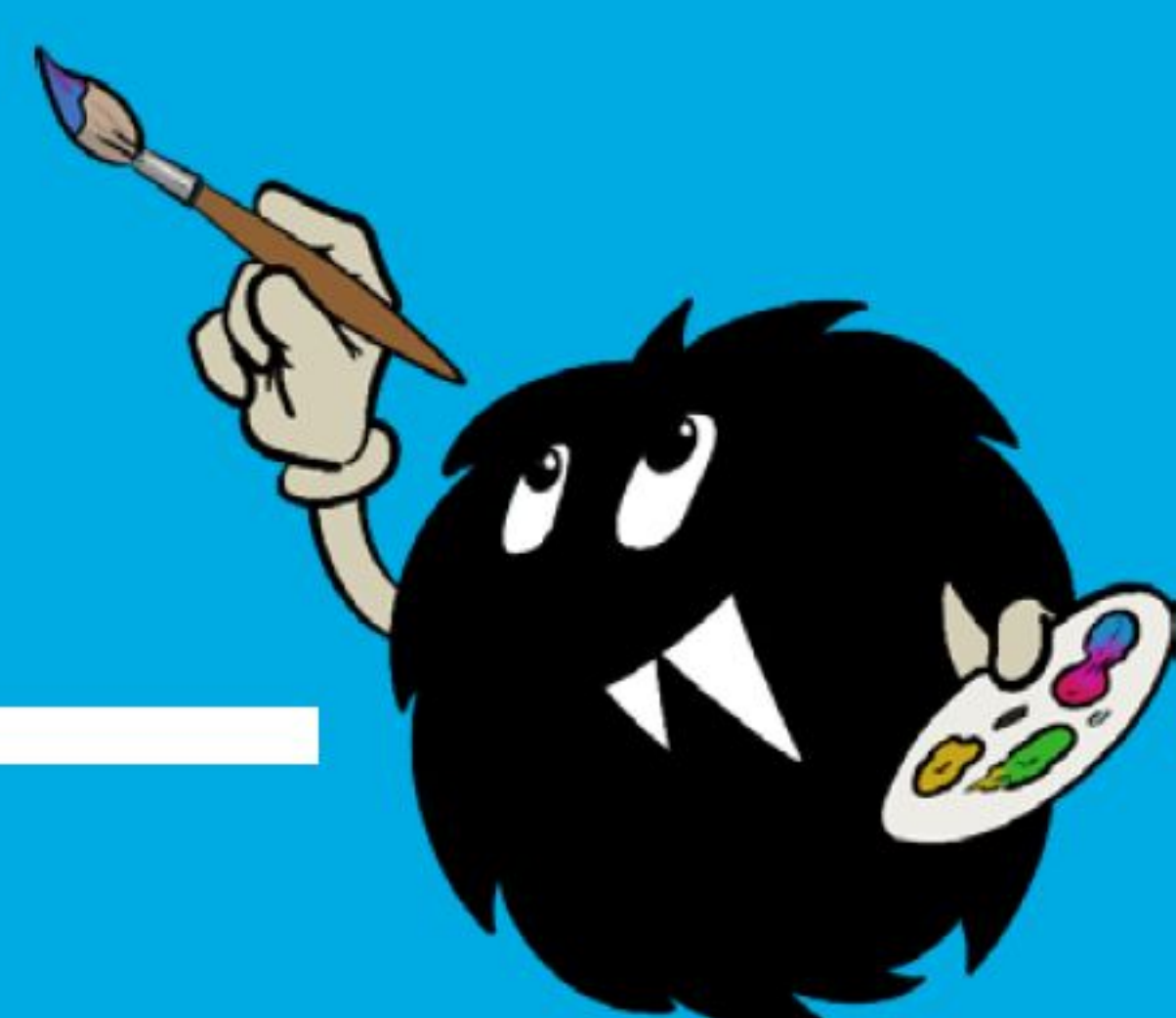
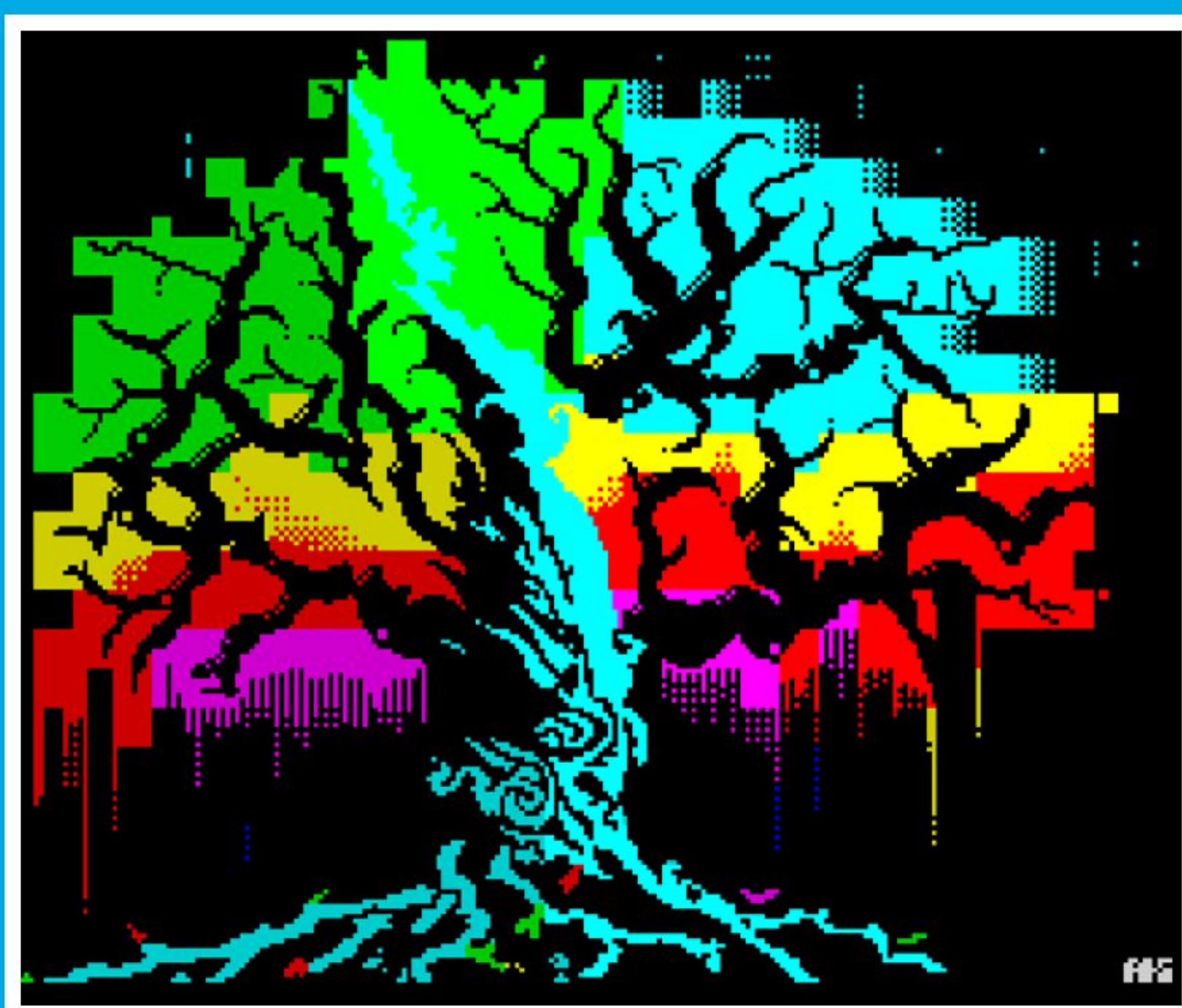
confidence in my choices for this month, so while we hurtle through space at breakneck speeds, let's step into the gallery and enjoy.

Tree of Life 2023 Aki

This first piece appeals mostly because of the audacity shown in playing boldly with the attributes. They are front and centre, with no attempts made to disguise them whatsoever and in presenting them in such a way, the image works all the better for it.

There's a loose freedom in the thick black lines with an almost "Pop" Art vibe (if I'm allowed to use such a word.) going on. The tree stands stretching its branches upwards, while in the background, modernity encroaches.

Lovely stuff.



Hearts 2023: helpcomputer0

This is one of a series of superb images from a UK pixel pusher who wishes to remain anonymous.

The clarity of line. The composition. The dexterous use of colour and magnificent ability to hide the attributes just smacks of talent throughout.

What sealed the deal for me on this particular image was the choice of making the heart truly pixelated in the most obvious of ways, and I have to admit I found it jaw-dropping.

The two elements couldn't be further apart in their execution, yet together they make a perfect whole and combine to create a truly memorable piece of work to wrap up a great year of pixels in 2023.

Stay safe, people. Happy New Year, and I'll hopefully see you in '24!

TENEBRA 2



Haplo

£ DONATION • 10/2023 • 48K / 128K

DOWNLOAD: <https://on.mom/VSVo>

Cast your mind back around a year or so (issue 13) and you may well remember a cracking little puzzle game called *Tenebra* that was warmly received throughout the CRASH team. If you were a fan too, then you'll be very pleased to learn that it's back! In sequel form! The dungeon puzzler that got your grey matter working overtime has indeed returned, and this time it has some more tricks up its sleeve. The main protagonist still has issues with walking in the dark, but as well as the usual keys lying around to open up various doors, there are also a few portal guns hiding in the dark - what wonderful things can we do with these?

Criticism

This is pretty much as direct a sequel you can get. Looks are the same, sounds are the same, and the overall goal is the same - solve the puzzles, escape the dungeon, and then do it all again - 35 times. The game starts with a few levels that are there to remind you how to play the game, how to use each item, and what each one does or evolves into, in case you've forgotten, which in my case was needed and welcomed. It



had been way too long since I'd played the original, and as soon as I got into the swing of things, I remembered what had drawn me into it initially. The simplistic graphics,



flickering lights, and minimal sounds all return, and it was like putting on an old comfortable pair of shoes - reliable and satisfying.

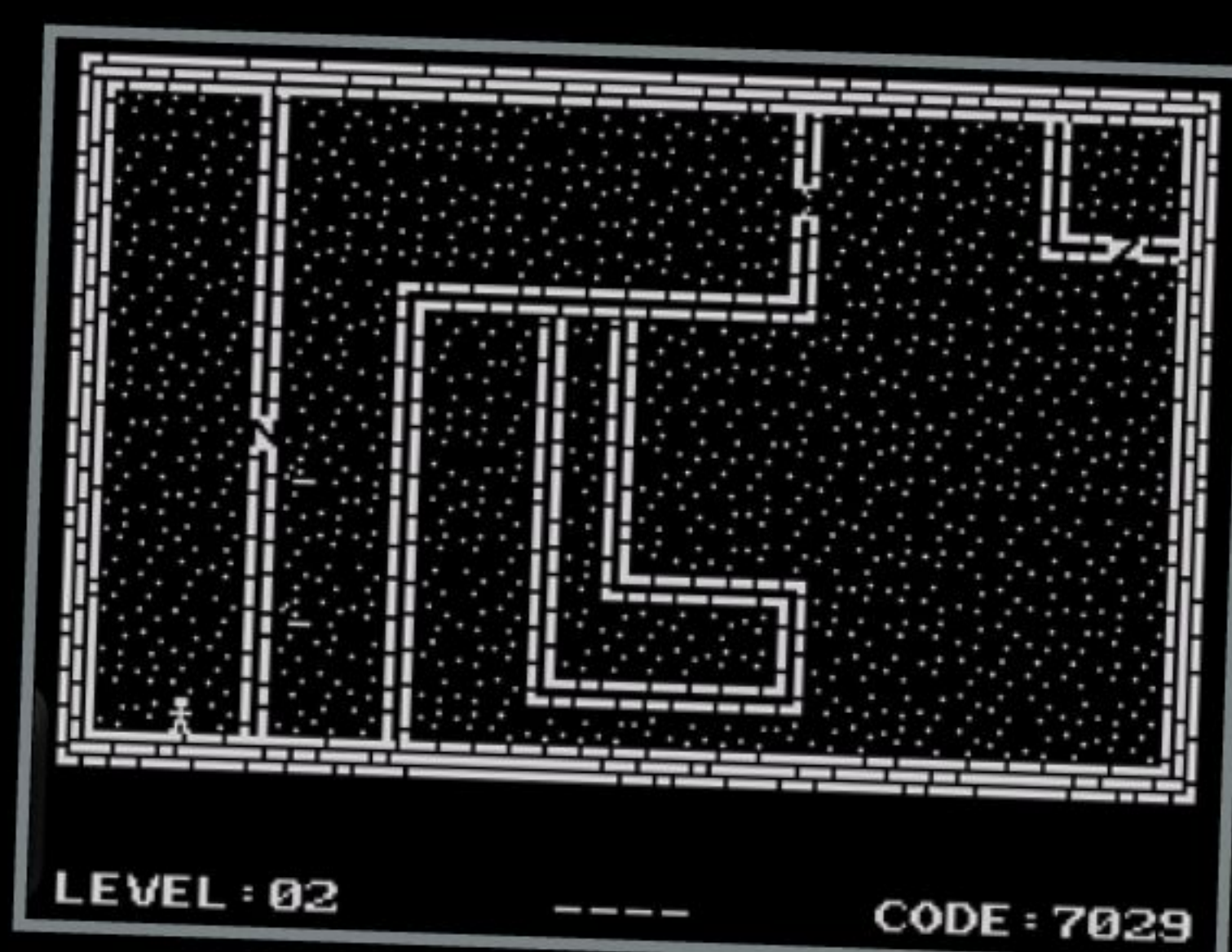
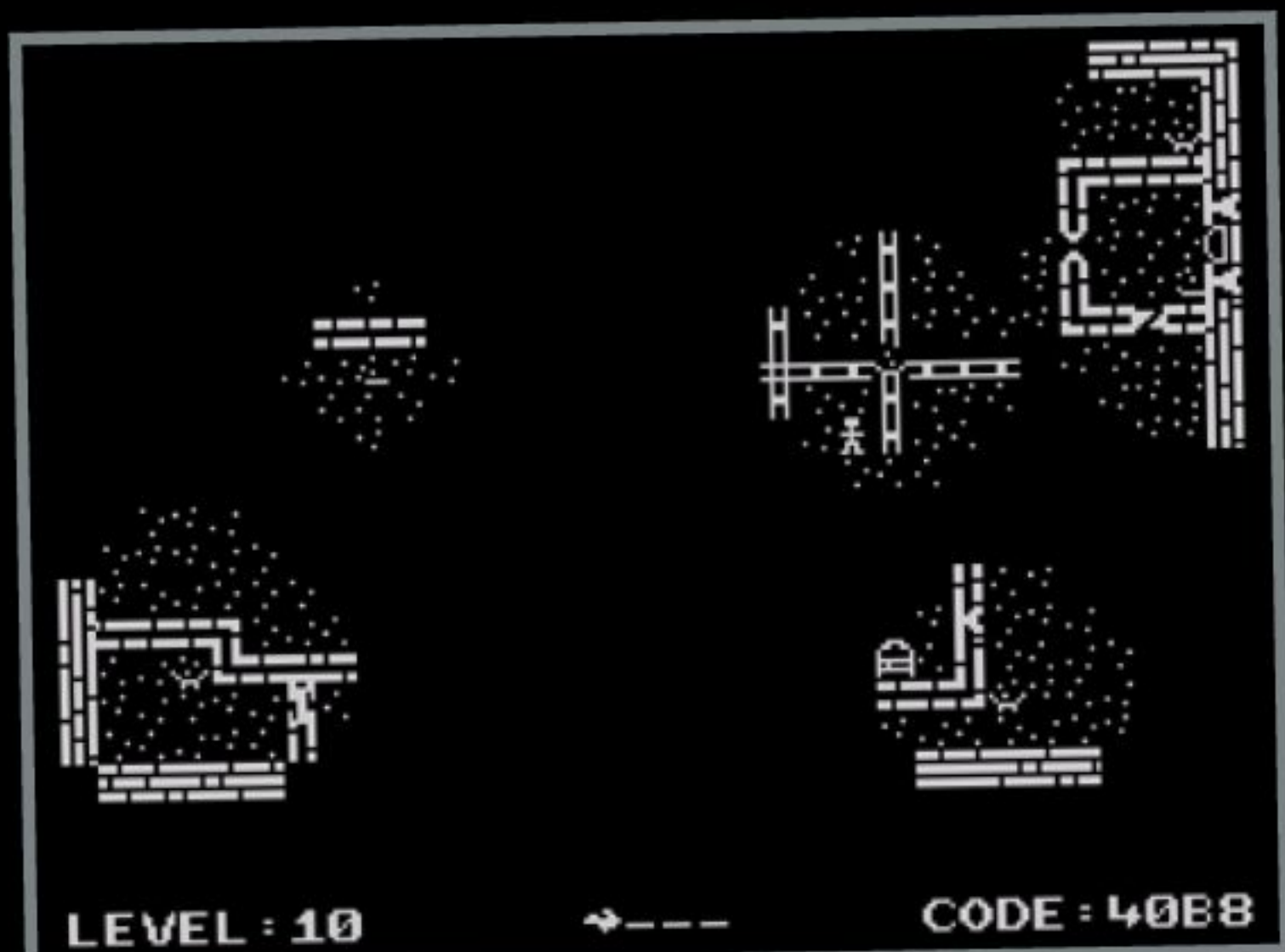
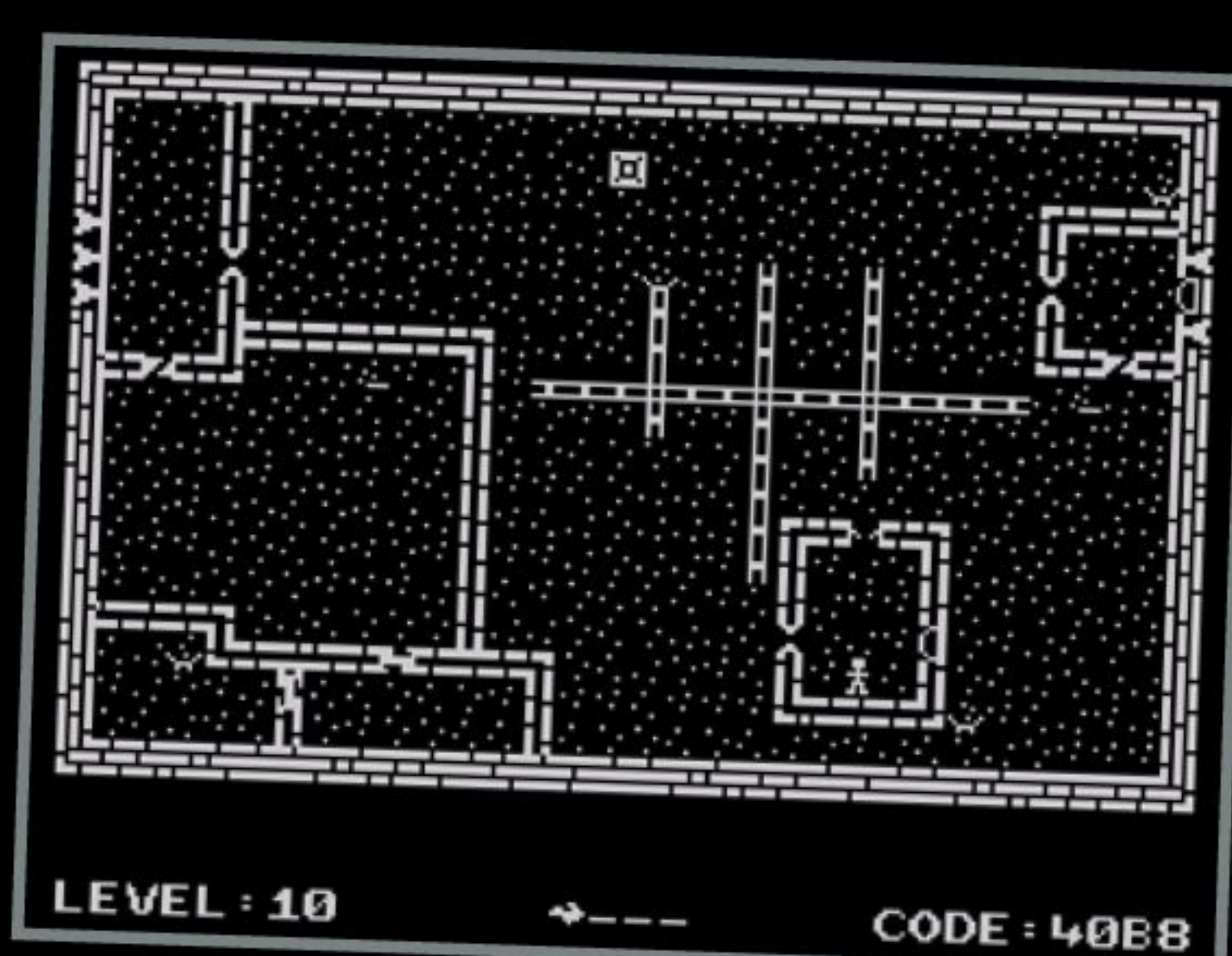
As mentioned, the items from the original return - the torches, keys, doors, and railway tracks but as also mentioned, a new item is in town: the portal gun. The portal gun works as you may imagine; fire it into one wall, and then another, then walk into one portal and come out of the other. This adds a new dimension to the game, and is a welcome addition. To make things a little trickier, though, the portals can only be fired into certain parts of the walls, so you can't go firing portals around the place willy-nilly, which again means having to carefully think and plan your escape. Another returning feature is the ability to restart the level should you get stuck and not be able to break out, and after getting myself stuck between two portals and locked in behind some walls, it was a somewhat welcome return.

- **Paul Davies**

Gordon's Take

I'm sure Tenebra is semi-autobiographical - well, it is to me.

After a night on the lash, the main protagonist returns home and must find his way about in the dark so as not to awaken the missus. It's an RPG, and I can play it any way I like. Joking aside, this brilliant limited-vision puzzler has returned for a sequel - it's bigger, better, and has portals; yes, those very portals that were made famous in the game of the same name. If you enjoyed the first, then you will most definitely like this continuation. The minimalistic look of this game is what gives it its charm.



Comments

The black and white graphics are minimalistic, but coupled with the flickering lights, make it very atmospheric. Sound is similarly minimal. Overall, this is a welcome return to the Tenebra world and just as addictive as the first. A great little puzzler to get your chin scratched, beard stroked (if available), and, if the mood takes you, hair pulled. Great stuff!

Keyboard: Q,A,O,P, M / SPACE

Joystick: Kempston

Use of Computer:	80%
Graphics:	77%
Playability:	86%
Getting started:	85%
Addictive Qualities:	86%

Overall: 86%

Nick Robert's PLAYING TIPS



I write this as I prepare for Christmas in a week's time (yes, we make this mag months in advance!) I have a long drive back to old Ludlow town to do, picking up my mum and bringing her to my place for Christmas. Of course, I'll have to do a drive-by of 1 & 2 King Street, just above the old Victoria Wine shop, looking up at the window of the office where I wrote my first Playing Tips intro. Wonderful memories of a youth well spent!

ACADEMY HINTS & TIPS

Helpful hints from back in the day, sent in by Russell Mulcahy of Sheffield!

At the OK Coral
Lots of missiles and good shields are

required for this. The missiles are for the armoured crawlers which are invulnerable to lasers. When shooting scanners you should seek out groups of robots

and approach them slowly. As they attack, zap them, don't use the missiles.

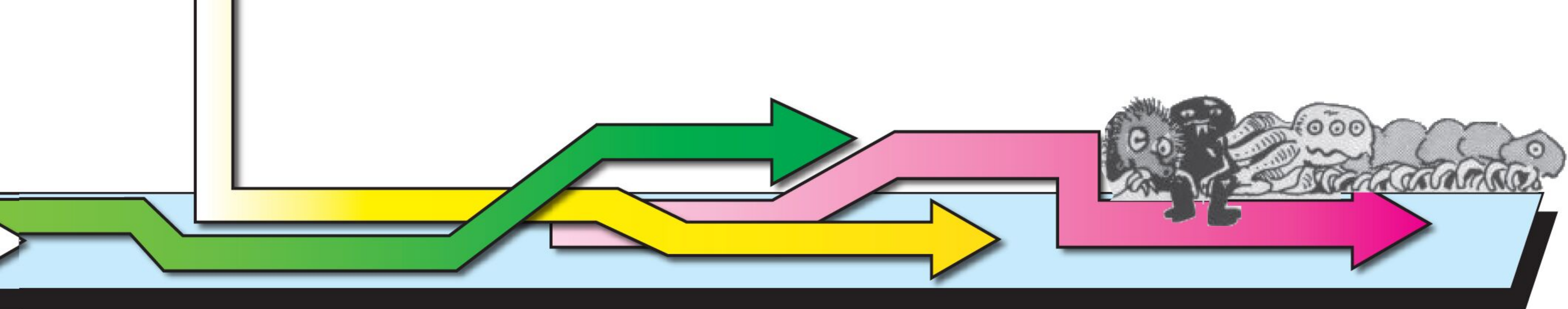
Hide and Seek
Delay bombs are needed, but missiles, AAMs or good lasers are not essential. However, it's wise to keep a hold on some



good shields. The suppressor droid is moved by shooting at it – but they're difficult to control. Move one over to a group of solar discs; close enough so you can get enter the group without being shot. Position yourself so all discs are visible on the central blue square of the scanner.

Turn round and fire at the suppressor, as you don't want to destroy it with discs. Keep firing until the discs return your fire, then drop the delay bomb and escape by flying towards the suppressor but don't crash into it. If





this is done correctly the bomb should destroy all the discs but not the suppressor. Remember – you only have two suppressors so don't waste them.

Level Three - Laserium

This one is dead easy! Design a Battle Skimmer with good lasers, shields, missiles, scanner, furry dice... No, cut the furry dice. Don't charge around the landscape, take it easy, returning to the GVL if you're damaged.



TIR NA NOG

Three pieces of the seal revealed here by S Coulthrust...

Dagda's Cauldron

First get the Daisy near the waterfall in Glasmarsh. Now go to the Slige Warrens. Now near to the invisible door in the Slige Warrens – this is the back door to Ceardach Calum, you can now go and pick up the cauldron without having to go past Nathair and get killed. When you've got the cauldron, go back out of Ceardach Calum, but the way you came in. Take the cauldron back to the altar of the seal.

The Stone of Fal

Get the book from the water cave and then go to the ice cave and get the ice. Now go to the cave called Dormant Sligen in the Slige Warrens and pick

up the sting. Find the tunnel and go through it and you are now in An Lin. Go West then take the second turning to the North, then the first turning to the North. Go East then North and you are in a dead end. Pick up the Halbeard. Go to Sgorr Brag and drop the Halbeard. You will now receive the Stone of Fal in return.

Lugh's Spear

Pick up the ring in the Lava Flats then go to the cave marked with an O. Enter this cave and pick up the antlers. Now go to the Forest of Cern, pick up the pin and go to the cave of Cernos the Hunter. Drop the antlers and he will give you a harp in return, take this. You are now able to walk through the Sidhe without dying. Follow the Sidhe and he will lead you through an invisible door, at the end of the tunnel there is Lugh's spear.

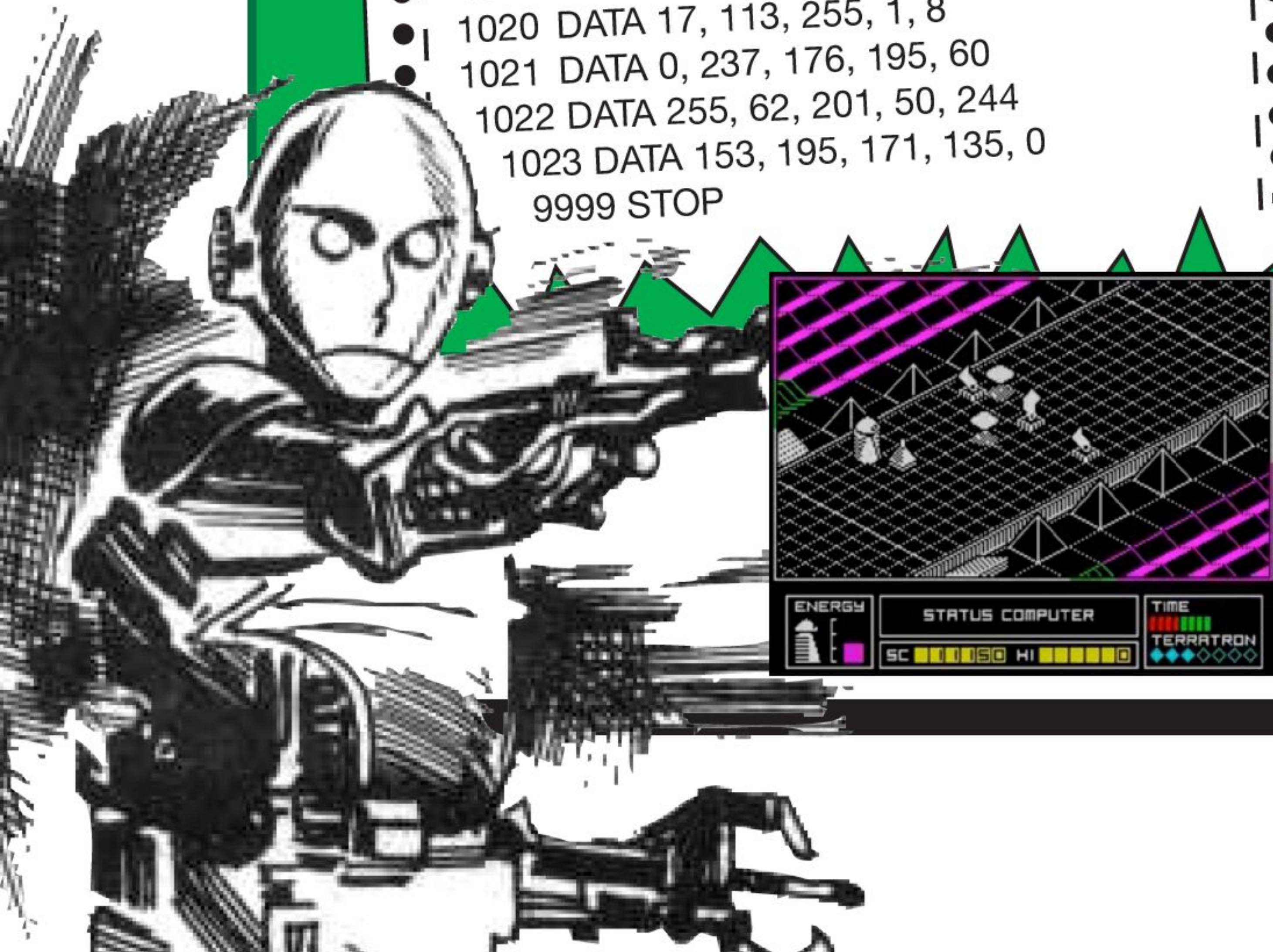


ALIEN HIGHWAY POKES

Top POKE fun from Phil Churchyard for taking on those aliens!

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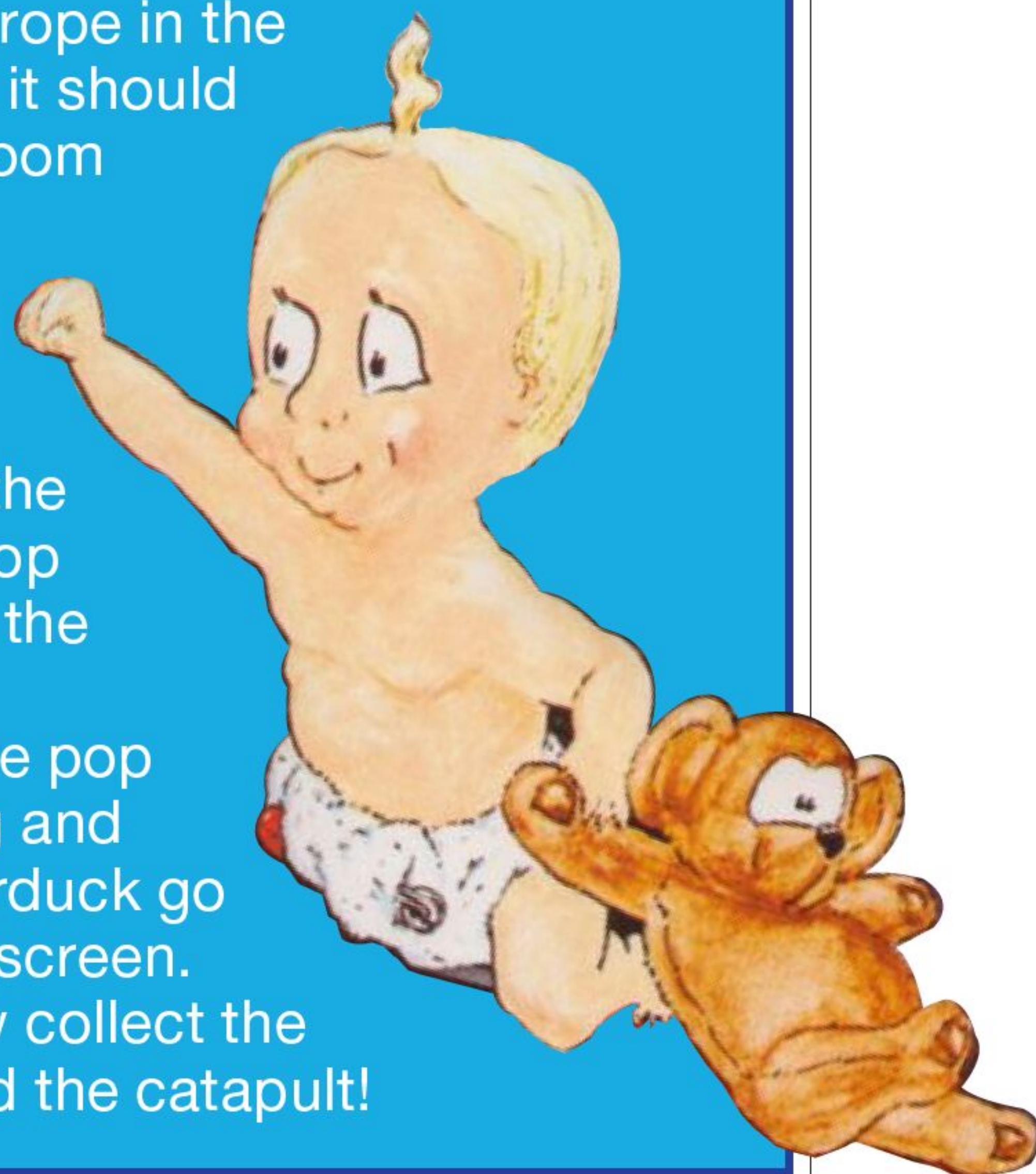
1 REM FIRST PRINTED IN CRASH
10 REM HIGHWAY LOADER
20 REM COPYRIGHT 1986 PHIL
30 REM CHURCHYARD
40 CLEAR 65449
50 RESTORE
60 LET weight=1
70 LET tot=0
80 FOR i=50000 TO 50119
90 READ a: LET tot=tot+a*weight
100 LET weight=weight+1
110 POKE i,a
120 NEXT i
130 IF tot<>906716 THEN PRINT "ERROR
140 IN DATA": BEEP 1,0: STOP
150 BORDER 0: INK 0: PAPER 0: CLS
160 PRINT #1,AT 1,4; "Start Alien Highway
170 tape"
180 RANDOMIZE USR 50000
190 DATA 33, 182, 92, 1, 58
200 DATA 0, 205, 232, 25, 205
210 DATA 118, 195, 205, 118, 195
220 DATA 62, 221, 50, 43, 95
230 DATA 33, 152, 201, 34, 44
240 DATA 95, 33, 140, 195, 17
250 DATA 170, 255, 1, 59, 0
260 DATA 237, 176, 201, 221, 33
270 DATA 0, 91, 17, 17, 0
280 DATA 175, 55, 205, 86, 5
290 DATA 221, 33, 0, 91, 33
300 DATA 203, 92, 195, 115, 8
310 DATA 62, 237, 50, 217, 252
320 DATA 33, 75, 160, 34, 218
330 DATA 252, 33, 171, 252, 17
340 DATA 0, 128, 1, 137, 0
350 DATA 237, 176, 33, 0, 128
360 DATA 34, 224, 252, 33, 207
370 DATA 255, 34, 38, 253, 195
380 DATA 217, 252, 33, 221, 255
390 DATA 17, 113, 255, 1, 8
400 DATA 0, 237, 176, 195, 60
410 DATA 255, 62, 201, 50, 244
420 DATA 153, 195, 171, 135, 0
430 9999 STOP
  
```

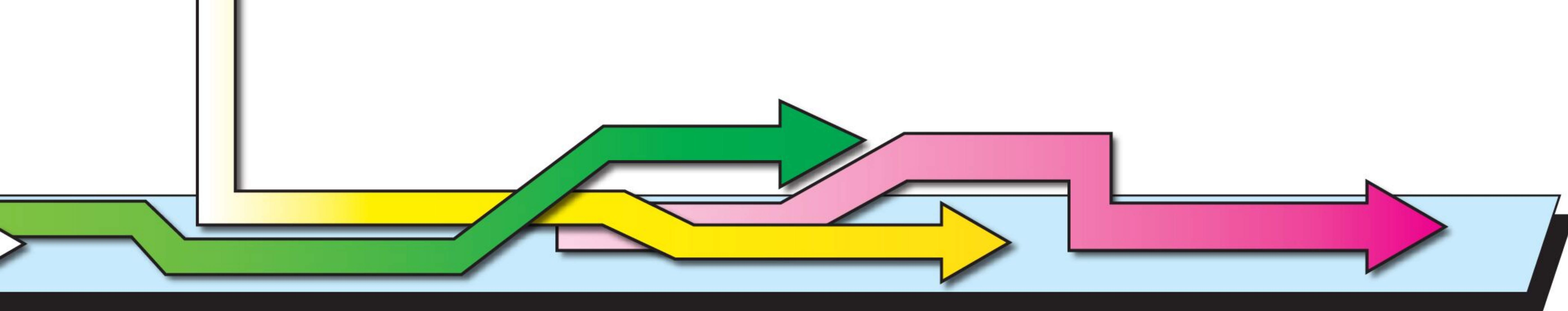


HERBERT'S DUMMY RUN

A J Wankling from Birmingham was kind enough to send in these top tips...

- First of all get the box key and get the honey pot. Now go to the room that you start off in and jump up on to the box. This will spring you up to where you can exchange the honey pot for the teddy.
- Get the rope. Now with the rope and the teddy go to the arcade room with the Daleks in it. The teddy will go and open the right hand side door; you can now go through this.
- Jump at the rope in the next room and it should extend into a room with a rubber duck; collect this.
- Load the pop gun (with the cork and the pop gun) and go to the castle.
- Exchange the pop gun for the flag and with the rubberduck go to the seaside screen.
- You can now collect the pebbles to load the catapult!





THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Domark's game was a true Speccy Classic. Here is some help...

Level One – The Probots

If you see a probot in the corner of the screen, go straight to it, firing at its top. This will destroy it and also destroy any transmissions that it may give out – thus giving you more time. Try to destroy as many as possible for a JEDI bonus.

Level Two – The Walkers

Manoeuvre your snowspeeder so that the AT-AT is in the middle of your view. Try to keep the AT-AT in the middle and watch out for fireballs. Now fire a cable. If you get it right, you will destroy the AT-AT. You

can also destroy them and the AT-STs by shooting at their eyes. For an extra bonus fly underneath the AT-AT's legs.

Level Three – The TIE Fighters

Not much strategy here, just shoot as many TIEs as possible! Though watch out for the fireballs in the corner of the screen. Shoot five TIEs for a JEDI bonus.

Level Four – The Asteroids

This is a piece of cake. Just hold down the left button; go up if there's an asteroid coming below, go down if they are above you. Using this method you should be able to get through it without even a close shave!

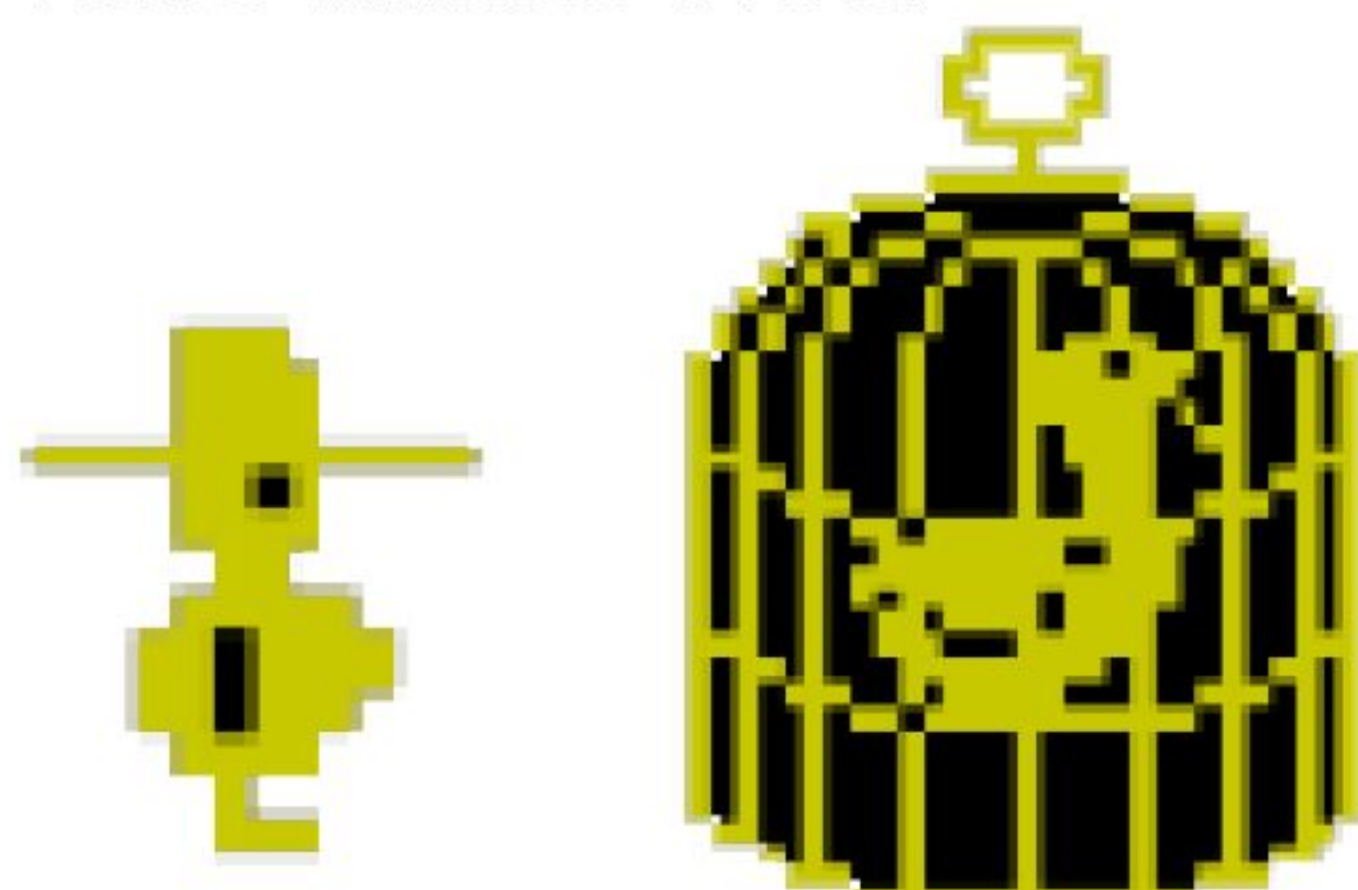


CHUCKIE EGG POKE!

Harry Henshaw wrote in and asked for a POKE for this classic A'n'F game!

What you need to do is **MERGE** "" the basic loader and then type **POKE 24501,195: GO TO 1**. When the game has finished loading

type **POKE 42837,0: RANDOMIZE USR 42000**. You should now have infinite lives!



TRANSYLVANIA CASTLE



Siyei Er

£ DONATION • 10/2023 • 48K

DOWNLOAD: <https://on.mom/MMiK>

The simple-minded peasants in the shire below are quick to judge, blaming all their ill-begotten luck on the mysterious castle of Count Dracula that towers above them, up in the mountains. Such is their anger and ill will that angry mobs have gone up the winding path to the unwelcoming place but never returned. It's just as well that they turned to the assistance of The Yellow Pages and called Professor Van Helsing (that's a lot of

letters to get through until 'V'). Never one to shy away from such adventures, he makes his way up the path but ends up bitten on his neck by something mysterious. Realising that the townsfolk's prejudices are actually with substance, our hero must defeat what lurks in the castle and cure the imminent curse that he indeed must have. With the premise known, the player is ready to delve deep into a graphical interpretation of a pen-and-paper RPG. The

castle is a complex maze of doorways and ladders, offering the freedom to select a preferred route. This visual part is displayed in just one segment of the screen. The other parts host the stats, map, and inventory. So, for the average gamer, unused to RPGs like this, you may feel there's little to look at, but this is the point - like its notepad equivalent, it's all about the imagination. Every time a new game begins, the map is randomly generated, providing players with unlimited playthroughs with varying degrees of difficulty. Upon entering each new room, players are presented with the choice to confront or evade a monster, allowing for strategic decision-making throughout the game. It's all about the stats, and it's worth keeping the pdf of the game instructions open to know an enemy's energy and attack points. It's better to

Paul's Take

I'll level with you - I'm not the biggest fan of RPGs, but I gave this one a go anyway, and although it has its moments of entertainment (you can't help but love the image of a man punching a giant spider in the face), I found the game frustrating in some areas. Not being able to exit a room because there was an enemy present and 'blocking my path' - even though I wanted to go the other way - and being forced to fight enemies when you know you're going to die had me gritting my teeth and pulling my hair out. Unlike the antics that a certain famous monster you may find in Transylvania gets up to, I struggled to get my teeth stuck into it.





defeat a lesser creature first and collect the weaponry they are guarding. This will level you up, enabling you to prevail against stronger beings. There are also four bosses to defeat in the castle - you will need to find artefacts that are their weakness if you want any chance of winning.

Criticism

Games like this tend to be offputting in the graphics department; it's not that they are ugly - they tend to lean towards being functional for the game's purpose. The allure lies in the unknown, and with the ever-changing castle in each playthrough, you never know what to expect.

I had an occurrence when I fought a nasty Cyclops as my first combatant. It's great fun just studying the page, examining your own energy and weaponry, and then deciding when is the right time to battle and the right time to evade a monster (at least for the time being). This RPG might not be everyone's slice of the action, but for those who savour strategic gameplay, it's like Van Helsing taking a detour from the adrenaline rush - a bit slow, but with its own spellbinding charm. The game was originally released in 2020, but the author has revisited and refined the game to give players the ultimate version in 2023.

- Gordon King



Comments

It's not a game with visual splendour, but what it lacks in graphics, it makes up for with compelling and immersive gameplay. Turn the lights out, let the CRT glow, and delve deep into the dungeons.

Keyboard: Q,A,O,P & M 1 - 3 to use inventory system.

Joystick: n/a

Use of Computer:	80%
Graphics:	64%
Playability:	92%
Getting started:	87%
Addictive Qualities:	88%
Overall:	80%

TARGET: RENEGADE



Having hit big with its Spectrum conversion of Taito's *Renegade* in 1987, Ocean soon began work on a home-exclusive sequel. With Mike Lamb once more on coding duties and Dawn Drake replacing Ronnie Fowles for the game's graphics, could Ocean repeat the critical and commercial success of *Renegade*? Let's find out as Graeme Mason welcomes you to the story of *Target: Renegade*, as told in the pages of the world's greatest Spectrum magazine.



THE GAME

The renegade is back, and this time, he's brought a friend! *Target: Renegade* replicated *Renegade*'s excellent gameplay, this time introducing simultaneous multiplayer. The scene is Scumville, a rancid city under the yoke of a criminal gang headed by the mysterious Mr Big. Throughout five seedy locations, *Renegade* punches and kicks his way against a horde of gang members, skinheads, and, erm, 'ladies of the night' before going head to head with Mr Big himself. Despite offering subtly different controls and moves to its predecessor, *Target: Renegade*'s multiplayer mode was its USP and the aspect that had CRASH drooling in anticipation.



MARKETING

"It's the only way to live", declared Imagine's advert inside issue 51 of CRASH. The somewhat familiar image of *Renegade* – a certain Mr Lee is an influence – is launching into one of those handy flying kicks, and in case you didn't understand the meaning of the title, a yellow crosshair focuses on his chest.



PREVIEW

Issue 51 also brought a little snippet of teased info for Renegade fans as we announced the arrival of two sequels: *Target: Renegade* and *Green Beret* follow-up, *The Vindicator*. Both *Renegade* and *Green Beret* were notorious non-smashes in CRASH, with 89% and 88% respectively. Would these sequels vanquish memories of our omissions?

DEATHWISH

You can't keep a good game down and following Ocean's huge successes *Renegade* (89%, Issue 44) and *Green Beret* (88%, Issue 28) come ***Target: Renegade* and *Vindicator – Green Beret II***. In *Target: Renegade* you're back on the streets beating up punks and

THE REVIEW

"Bish! Bash! Bosh! Now this is what I call a beat-'em-up," affirmed an excited Paul Sumner in his review comments of *Target: Renegade*, and his peers were just as animated. "It's packed full of great graphics, colour and sound, with five levels of pure

addictiveness," said Nick Roberts, and while Kati Hamza cited the one drawback, its jerky scrolling, she still reckoned *Target: Renegade* just edged past its illustrious predecessor.



THE VERDICT

What a difference one per cent makes! *Target: Renegade*'s extra solitary point elevated it to the CRASH Smash status the first game so clearly deserved. "More content and tougher characters make *Target: Renegade* the ultimate challenge", we concluded, with Playability and Addictive Qualities scoring 93% apiece. As for *The Vindicator*, it fell some way short, scoring 80% in issue 57.

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair

Graphics: every participant is full of character, having his or her own particular moves and style. The backgrounds add real atmosphere to the game, bringing the action right into your home

Sound: rough 'n' tough title tune with assorted mean ditties at the start of each of the five levels. Average spot effects

Options: definable keys, one or two players (simultaneously), music on/off

General rating: *Renegade* was never this much fun. More content and tougher characters make *Target Renegade* the ultimate challenge

Presentation	83%
Graphics	89%
Playability	93%
Addictive qualities	93%
OVERALL	90%

COMPETITION

There was some prize on offer inside issue 52 of CRASH as we celebrated Imagine's latest smash hit with a *Target: Renegade* competition. Ocean's compilation, *We Are The Champions*, awaited the runners-up, while second place got TEN Ocean/Imagine games, including *Target: Renegade*. That

first place prize, though – phew! A brand-new ZX Spectrum +3, a 14-inch portable TV, a *Target: Renegade* t-shirt, and TEN disk games to play on your new machine. All you had to do was design and draw the perfect, meanest and most dangerous baddie for *Renegade* to tackle. Easy peasy...

WITH A +3
AND 14-INCH
TV FROM



SCUMVILLES'S inhabitants, source of all the hero's troubles in Imagine's Smashed *Target Renegade* are less than keen to do anyone a favour. Ask them for directions and they'll give you a kick in the teeth. Go out of your way to avenge the death of your brother and you've really got your work cut out: skinheads, Beastie Boys fans and manic motorcyclists are just the start of one long round of trouble. The only way to get your own back is to fist-fight, wrestle, spar and box your way to the final level and the ultimate confrontation with underworld leader Mr Big...

Or is it? CRASH is giving you a much less strenuous chance of getting back at the Scumville urban bandits. Just design the meanest, nastiest, most malicious, callous and contemptible city crook, equip him with whatever you think a streetwise scoundrel is likely to be carrying, stick your idea on a piece of paper and send it off to us. Remember that a city thug isn't going to have too much money to buy fancy weapons, so no bazookas or mega blasting machine guns please. You'll be judged on the basis of your idea, not the quality of your materials, so an original pencil drawing is just as likely to win as an elaborate airbrushed offering which in any case we can't return.

The most exciting, imaginative and resourceful effort will be rewarded with brand new Spectrum +3 and a shiny, gleaming 14-inch portable TV. As if that isn't enough Imagine are also throwing in a copy of *Target Renegade* as well as nine other disk-based games and a *Target Renegade* T-shirt. A single second prize winner receives ten Ocean/Imagine games on cassette (*Target Renegade*, *Firefly*, *Renegade*, *Revenge of Doh*, *Rastan*, *Platoon*, *Combat School*, *Head over Heels*, *Matchday II* and *Wizball*) plus a T-shirt and there are five cassette versions of the sports compilation *We are the Champions* awaiting further runners-up.

Entries, on one sheet of paper with your name and address, should be sent to: **IMAGINE RIGHT ON TARGET COMP, CRASH, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB** and must be received by June 7. The decision of the appointed CRASH judges is final and binding in all respects.

NOTE: TV MAY DIFFER FROM THAT SHOWN



CHARTING TARGET

Target: Renegade proved just as popular with readers as the CRASH reviewers. The Imagine/Ocean game entered the CRASH chart in issue 54 and became a stalwart right up until the charts' demise. It took the top spot in issue 56 (moving above *Renegade* in the process) and remained there until issue 60, when our chart revamp saw *Target: Renegade* bob around the lower reaches of the top 20 until the end came in issue 65.



ONE LUCKY CHAP

Brian M McDonough of Manchester was the lucky CRASH reader who secured that splendiferous (LMLWD) prize in issue 52's *Target: Renegade* competition. Apparently, 'thousands' of entries came in for this

popular compo – not surprising considering the first prize on offer! Richard Winder of County Durham was a close second, winning the games and a T-shirt.

Evans, Notts NG17 3EB; Shaun Hill, Kent ME13 7SH; D Trigg, London SW19 2TQ; Jonathan James, Birmingham B45 9QQ; Roy Harwood, W.Sussex RH13 8BX; Kevin Shaw, Kent ME1 2QE; John Sneddon, East Lothian EH32 9BL; Guy Laking, Lincs LN11 0XL; Ben Collister, Wilts SN6 6NZ; Stephen Sintern, Peterborough PE6 8ET; L Andrew, Kent TN12 0DD; Mrs J Mitchell, Cumbria CA28 8RX; Stuart Wilins, Beds LU7 0RQ; Ian James Goshawk, Essex IG9 5JN; Douglas Laver, Hants PO3 6AX; Christopher Povey, Kent DA11 8NY; Helen Malcolm, Strathclyde KA4 8JW; Duncan Lewis, Derbys DE4 5FP; Bryan Else, Derby DE2 0NH; Stephen Hammond, S.Wales CF4 8JS; Marvin Reynolds, Cheshire CW2 6JF; A Hulmes, Cheshire WA15 7SZ; Jeremy Johnson, Oxfordshire OX8 4LX; Nik Theodorou, Greece; Stephen Johnson, Lancs BB1 5PY; Mitchell Jagd, Denmark; John Gilmartin, Derby DE2 0PB; Paul Kennefick, Coventry CV3 4EB.

FORCEFUL

Issue 52

I'd imagine that Brian M McDonough from Manchester M23 is well chuffed at winning the Spectrum +3 (with ten disk games), 14-inch portable TV and *Target Renegade* T-shirt – but after all his entry was the best of thousands that came flooding in for this terribly popular competition. Richard Winder from Co Durham came a close second, and he gets ten

Ocean/Imagine games consisting of such delights as *Combat School*, *Head Over Heels*, *Match Day II* and *Platoon* – and a *Target Renegade* T-shirt.

Five runners-up get a copy of that fabbo compilation, *We Are The Champions*. They are... Daniel Moscrop, Cumbria CA5 5AW; Ian Waters, London NW6 7LA; Craig Parrett, London NW3 2YY; Shahnawaz Khan, London SE18 2QW; Glenn Taylor, Gwynedd N Wales.

IMAGINE RIGHT ON TARGET

Issue 52

I bet there's loads of people out there who wished they'd won the terrific Sony Watchman that Virgin Games were giving away in their

Action Force II comp. But, first out of the bag came Geoffrey Packer from E Sussex.

Three second prize winners get an *Action Force* Dragon Fly helicopter... O Bezalely, London NW4 4RU; Chris Aylott, Hants SO5 1GP; P R Taylor, Leics LE15 7AU. Ten further runners-up get a machine crafted figurine of the *Action Force* star, Airtight... Adam Penney, S.Yorks S61 2QT; C Priestman, N.Humbs HU4 7SW; Mark Islam, Lancs BL8 2JU; S Smith, Walsall WS6 6DT; A Brown, London N6 4SP; Mr S Binsley, Hants SP11 9QD; David Challoner, Isle Of Wight PO30 5RR; Vincent Sweeney, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne NE3 1UH; John Veness, Southampton SO2 4LR; Marcus Shadbolt, Wilts BA15 1HG.

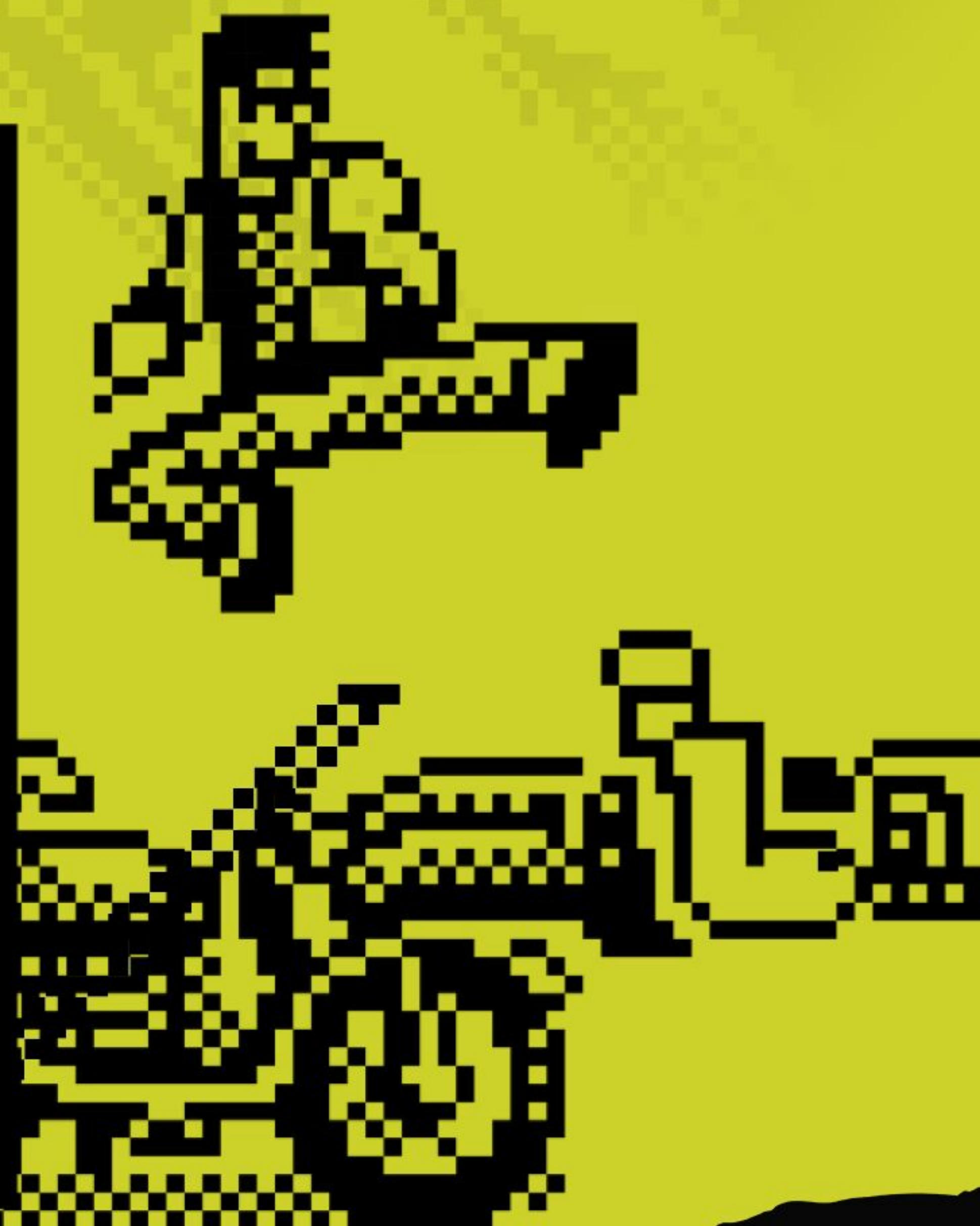
And, like all the above winners, ten further runners-up get a copy of the Virgin Games game. They are... D Taylor, Mid Glamorgan CF32 7BL; N Bere, Kent ME16 0PR; Richard Jones, Hants PO8 0TL; Richard Lockett, Staffs ST13 8QB; Steve Wallis, Dyfed SY23 3RZ; Matthew Treadwell, Surrey KT16 9PF; Simon Blackstein, Middlesex HA8 8RT; Gary Senff, Scotland AB1 4QA; David Thompson, Darlington DL3 8RU; Karl Challener, Lancs BB9 9PL.

All winners, please allow 28 days for the delivery of your prizes. All queries regarding competitions run in CRASH should be sent to Frances Mable, CRASH, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB. Please don't ring Frances as she has enough trouble reading through all your entries as it is.

THE SEPTEMBER CHARTS

HOTLINE TOP 20

1 (3)	TARGET; RENEGADE	IMAGINE
2 (4)	CYBERNOID	HEWSON
3 (1)	MATCH DAY II	OCEAN
4 (2)	RENEGADE	IMAGINE
5 (7)	OUT RUN	US GOLD
6 (11)	ELITE	FIREBIRD
7 (-)	PLATOON	OCEAN
8 (6)	DRILLER	INCENTIVE
9 (▶)	DARK SIDE	INCENTIVE
10 (5)	EXOLON	HEWSON
11 (-)	ENDURO RACER	ACTIVISION
12 (10)	COMMANDO	ELITE
13 (12)	GAUNTLET	US GOLD
14 (-)	PAPERBOY	ELITE
15 (14)	FLYING SHARK	FIREBIRD
16 (19)	MATCH DAY	OCEAN
17 (-)	THUNDERCATS	ELITE
18 (-)	ATF	DIGITAL INTEGRATION
19 (▶)	BIONIC COMMANDO	GO!
20 (13)	BUBBLE BOBBLE	FIREBIRD



TIPS, POKES AND MAPS

Given its popularity in the charts, it was no surprise to see the Imagine game feature in the tips pages. Graeme Howard of Caldicot got us going in issue 54 with advice on negotiating each level and a handy infinite lives cheat, before Multiface owners got a POKE to do the same thing four issues later. Further tips appeared throughout various issues and as late as December 1991.

Target: Renegade was indeed a perennial fave with Speccy owners.



Nick Roberts's

PLAYING TIPS



Happy birthday to me, Happy Birthday to me. Yes, you've guessed it's my birthday (on the 9th of July). I'll be 16 then, and just to celebrate I asked 'The Management' if I could have one of those little birthday tune things on the first page of the tips. It would be nice to open up CRASH at your favourite section and hear a microchip celebrating my birth wouldn't it? No? Oh well! This is also a special month for Victor Look because he wins the competition to map Gremlin's Northstar. As well as this brilliant map there's also a solution to the mysterious 18th sector of Driller and, of course, the one you all love, Cheat Mode Motel. So don't delay, read those tips today!

HIT THAT TARGET

Right, for all you *Target Renegade* fans out there (and there are enough of you!), here's hard man Graeme Howard of Caldicot with a few tips and a cheat

to toughen up your street fighting skills. He will soon be receiving a voucher for £30 to buy himself some new knuckle dusters!

The Car Park

Jump-kick the guy on the bike and all the baddies once, then punch them while they're on the floor. As soon as a man with a weapon arrives on the scene, jump-kick at him and then pick up his weapon. A weapon gives more points when used than unarmed combat.

The Seedy Street

The ladies of the night will follow you so wait with the woman to your left until the man with the gun shoots, killing the woman instead of you. When the man has run out of bullets you can kill the ladies, then the man—he is harmless without ammunition.

City Park

Go right as quickly as possible, since there is an axe lying on the ground there. Use the axe to simply hack your way through all the baddies. Keep walking until you reach the exit.

Shopping Mall

Here, the game gets harder. The 'Beastie Boys' duck when a jump-kick is made so to kill these you have to jump-kick over the top of them and then use back-kick twice to put them on the floor. While they're down, punch them. Use the techniques used in the car park to defeat the other baddies.

The Sleazy Bar

The bodyguards hug and head-butt you if you don't use the 'Beastie Boys' technique quickly. They are hard guys but can be punched while they're on the floor after just one hit. When the bodyguard with the snooker cue enters, knock him to the floor and quickly pick up his cue since it makes defeating baddies easier. Try to take the snooker cue to meet the boss.

The Boss

Surprisingly, this is one of the easiest parts of the game! All you have to do is to collect the cue from the bottom left side of the screen (if you don't already have it) and wait in front of the boss. When he comes close hit him twice with the cue and he will fall to the ground. Repeat this four times and he dies. Matt can now rest in peace.

Cheat for Infinite Lives

Firstly play the game until a high score is achieved. Once on the high score table press 'CAPS SHIFT' and '0' at the same time until about two to three lines are filled up with the symbol C/S. Now press 'ENTER'. The screen goes jumbled and look like a crash. Play on through the game and after a short time the screen returns to normal, but you have infinite lives.

TARGETTING A BUDGET RE-RELEASE

Ocean's The Hit Squad budget label was proving highly successful by the early Nineties, and *Target: Renegade* got the re-release treatment in issue 84 of January

1991. Despite being a hoary three-year-old, the brawler proved it still had what it took, with Nick awarding the game an impressive 84%. "Non-stop beat-'em-up action all the way," he concluded.

TARGET: RENEGADE

The Hit Squad
■ £2.99 ■ rerelease

Fight your way through five tough scenes of beat-'em-up action to meet Mr Big and give him a right good wacking.

Target: Renegade is the second of the three Renegade games and provides some great action packed punch ups.

The game is set in the city of Scumville and each scene will bring different types of villains for you to deal with. You can attempt to battle through the game on your own or alternatively get a friend along for the ride. Two players can play simultaneously, each protecting the other. This way you stand a much better chance of surviving.

The baddies can pop up from anywhere. Some hide in doorways and others attempt to run you down on their motorbikes. They would be quite easy to kill with a well placed punch or kick if it weren't for the deadly weapons some carry.

Mallets, axes and metal bars are just a few of the gruesome objects they use. Fortunately these weapons can be of use to you too. Just punch the bod with the weapon and you can steal it from him.

Graphics are all well drawn, sprites are animated well and backgrounds have their fair share of colour. The levels get better as you progress, starting in the mutli-storey car park and going through the shopping mall to the bar where you can battle with Mr Big around a snooker table. I really enjoyed it when it was first released and it's got me hooked again. *Target: Renegade* is excellent, non-stop beat-'em-up action all the way.

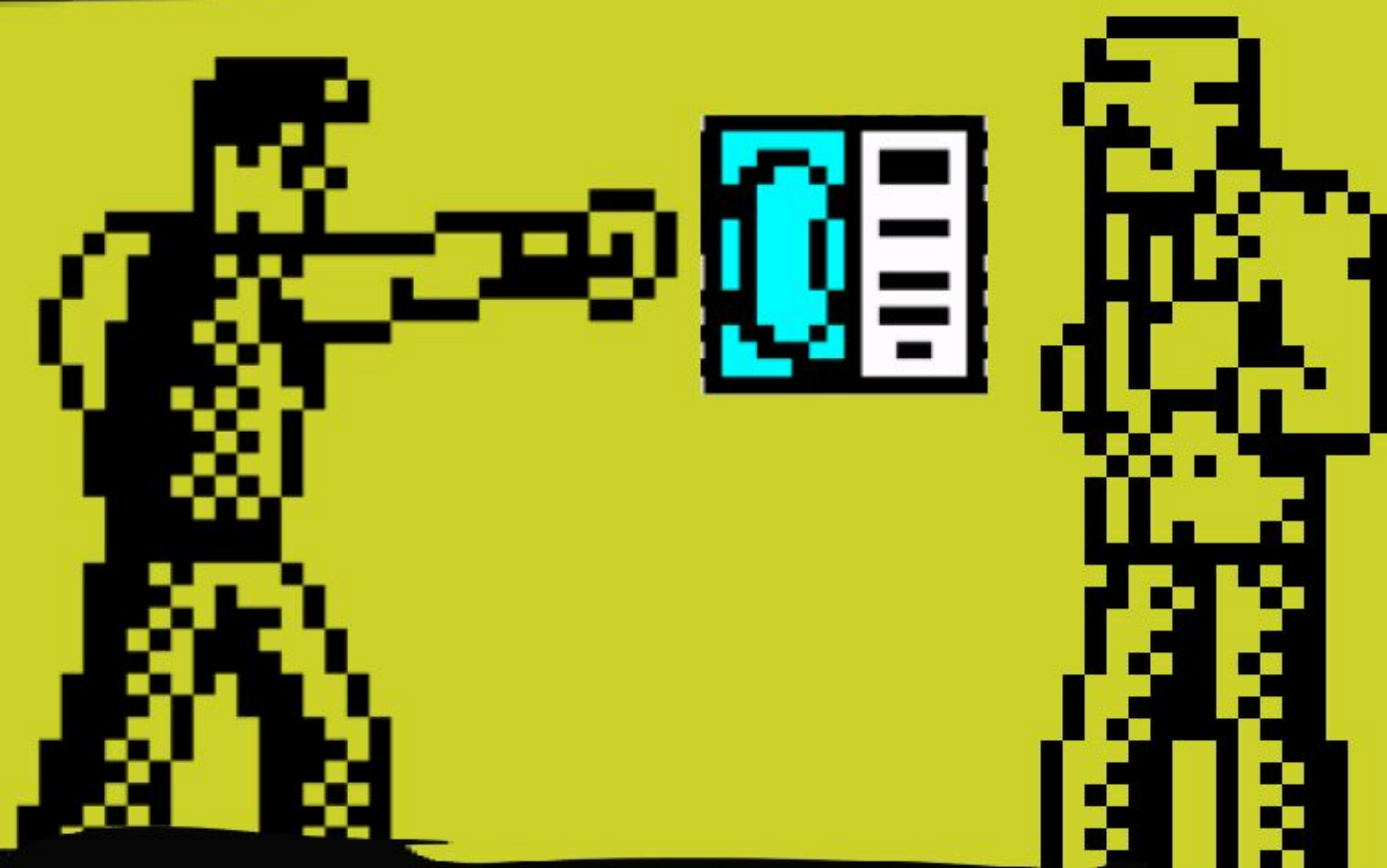
NICK

RATING
OVERALL 84%

FINAL THOUGHTS

In many ways, *Target: Renegade* is almost the perfect sequel: similar to the original, but offering enough new elements to satisfy fans wanting something fresh. While the action was great for one player, the co-op play really shines, ensuring its place in the top tier of Speccy beat-'em-ups.

EXIT+



RUSTY PIXELS



Mike 'Flash' Ware, the master coder in the development team Rusty Pixels, has been responsible for creating some of the best games released on the Spectrum Next over the last few years. CRASH's Gordon King interrupts him from his busy schedule to catch up with him.

Hi Mike, thanks for taking the time out of your busy schedule from *Head Over Heels* for the Next to chat with us. Obviously, the classic above is hot on everyone's lips at the moment, but before we get into that, I'm curious as to how you got into programming in the first place. Was the original Spectrum an influence on this passion?

I started at school in 1978 with the old teletype computers that printed responses without a VDU. I used to buy all the magazines of the day and pick the code apart that was published in the program listings to try and work out how they worked. I got the pre-Spectrum Sinclairs to play with and had a lot of fun writing little routines to run on them, though I only started coding assembler once I got a Commodore 64. One of the good things about the C64 was how bad and slow its basic was. It forced you to look into assembler, which was helped immensely by the programmers' reference guide. The bug bit, and I have been coding on and off ever since.

Have you released anything commercially before the Next games that you've released in recent years?

Warhawk on the C64 is the most remembered. I think this was done with two friends (Ian Gogay and Andrew Betts) and me back in 1985 (released in 1986).

Yes, *Warhawk* - so this was great to be redone for the NEXT. So, how did you come about doing this?

I was contacted by Simon Butler asking if I had heard about the Next. I had not. He suggested I do a game for it, perhaps *Warhawk*. So, I decided it would be nice to code in Z80 as that's the one processor I had not coded with. Henrique was great and sent an early dev board because, at the time, I relied on Jim Bagley to test on hardware, so it was a struggle to fix bugs.

I love the whole *Starforce* (arcade game) vibe to this title. Did it feel fresh to return to an old game that you had completed in the past? I appreciate it's not tit-for-tat, but I'm sure it would have rekindled some old memories.

It was nice doing it on the Next and learning Z80 as I went along. Also, I was working with a more limited feature set at the time. The Next could only display 12 sprites on a line; there was no tile map, etc. It's more the NEXT that brings back the nostalgia in some ways than coding *Warhawk*. It's so nice to

have a computer like the computers we all started on back in the day and to enjoy it again and yet have the power to do the things you only dreamt of back then.





Ignoring the new technical abilities of the Next, as you alluded to, it surpasses the limitations of the original Spectrum - how does coding for the Z80 compare to the 6510?

It's hard to say; I like both. For differing reasons, Z80 and 6510 need care to get the best out of them. However, one thing that I really miss in Z80 is index registers. Dealing with data in Z80 should be a breeze but is hampered by the loss of these registers. The Z80 has the ix and iy registers, which help, but they are really slow and best avoided as much as possible. But then Z80 has more registers, so that's a bonus. Weighing them up - both are pretty balanced.

So, with these new coding skills, you moved on to *Baggers in Space*, the brilliant adaption of the Jetpac concept. How did this come about, and when was it decided to make Jim Bagley the titular character?

It was never intended as a game. Obviously, inspiration was taken from *Jetpac*. SpaceFractal wanted a version of *Space Taxi* on the Next, so I built a quick project to show him the basics. I needed something simple with velocity and inertia. So, a basic demo was created. I shared it with SpaceFractal and a video on the Next FB group. Jim suggested making it into a game; we discussed what to do with it, and he said - perhaps you can blow a hole in the planet and explore underground. So, I moved the fuel subsurface and added TNT to help get there, and the game was born, mixing a bit of *H.E.R.O* in for good measure. As for the name, I wonder whose idea that was....



Of course, there is a sequel in the works, isn't there? I had the privilege of seeing a demo of it at Play Expo. For those who have yet to see that - what can they expect in the next chapter?

Yes, this is complete and on the SD cards with the KS2 units.

I decided to rip the original to bits and recode the engine. So, it's ramped up to 11 and has a lot more in it, including bigger levels, more enemies, and more particles. It isn't a true sequel, but it follows on from the end of the first game.

Tyvarian offered us a fresh take on *Gridrunner*. It certainly harks back to that time with simplistic but addictive gameplay. Were arcade games a significant influence on you?

Solar Fox was one I loved back in the arcades and was partially an inspiration for *Tyvarian* (and its sequel), but I'm also a massive Minter fan, so it became a homage



to both. There are a lot of arcade games that inspire/influence me, many that are favourites of mine and many that I would love to reimagine. Growing up, my 'wow' moments in the arcade started like most with *Invaders* and *Space War*. But as time passed, it was great seeing all these games evolve.



Moving on to the world of **Crowley** - he's had a few adventures by you now, hasn't he? We've seen him take on the puzzle genre in *World Tour 1 & 2*, and he is also a star in his platforming adventure, similar to *Super Mario*. Like *Horace*, who came before him (with a passing resemblance - perhaps a little more devilish), is a bit of a mascot - if such a thing exists in this day and age. Are you planning any more games featuring him?

The first game was originally going to be called *Horace World Tour*, but things got a bit belligerent with this IP. Although I had been given a licence to use the Horace image (by Psion - *Horace in the Mystic Woods*), I decided to change it. Crowley was born to replace the Horace character, and it became his first game. I then set about writing a little back story for him that should span three games: *Crowley Beginnings* (as WIP was shown), *Crowley* (the Mario-type game), and a third one. Work was started on two games featuring him, but they have stalled due to other commitments. The first of the games will be 'Crowley', part 2 of his story (the first being his escape from hell; he did not like it there - too hot). Work will resume on this, and it's intended to be a massive platforming game with many levels and challenges. The engine is coded, so I'm just waiting to make the whole game. When the KS2 came around, we had promised a 2-player game as a stretch goal. This was a good time for Crowley to go on another tour. His second full game is a puzzle game with 2-player battles or joint play, featuring over 2000 levels and many game modes. This will

also be on the SD cards with the KS2 deliveries. Hopefully, there will be several games featuring Crowley, and

we would love him (as would he) to become a bit of a mascot. And I really would love some plushies of him.

You have a busy schedule, and many of these projects are on hold because you're focused on *Head Over Heels* - the game everyone highly anticipates for their Nexts. It was one of those stretch goal announcements that got everyone excited. How did you land the role of this?

HOH was initially given to another coder about when the KS2 closed, but after two years, there was no progress despite being asked for demos. Ultimately, the coder was taken off the project, and I was asked about four times before I buckled. Initially, I accepted as Kev Brady was planning to join, but sadly, his health took a turn, and it was left to me. However, he has been a great help.

Was Simon Butler drafted in for graphics from the beginning, or was he around the same time?

He was at the start; he had done all the requested graphics in the first few weeks, meaning I could jump in with what was already there.

So, how does one go about tackling this? It's a well-known title, bloody massive, and not the easiest of games. How do you break this down so you can create it for the Next?

The first thing I looked at was rendering, finding the best way to use tiles/sprites/layer two together to make as good use of the Next as possible. Then, heaven help me, the detection and movement, and breaking it down into small portions to test easily as I went along. It was several weeks before I added a player character. From then on, I built a few test rooms. Using these



rooms, I created some of the more complex rooms and tried to break them. When I was satisfied they were working, it was on to the enemies and moving objects. Once these were done, it was on to the main part -



actual game rooms and navigation.

To create the layout, did you have to play the entire game, or did you use online available maps?

A bit of both: there is a complete map that I use for reference; it also helps as I can add notes to it as I go along. Some rooms are evident from the map, but others need to be played to understand the enemies in the rooms and the puzzles.

I believe you've strayed off the original path and offered some extra rooms?

Yes, and a whole new zone called TechTown. The new rooms are optional to complete the game. So, you can miss them all and still finish the game - but not with a perfect 100% completion. We did not want to modify the game too much for the player, so this was a compromise to enhance the game without enraging the purists. The game also offers an easy and hard mode, which changes some rooms in several



ways, i.e., removing a baddie, moving objects, or adding extra lives. Playing on Normal - they will be the same as you remembered.

Despite its MIA status until you came on board, have you found the process trouble-free?

Not by any means, no - it's a complex game with many of its own issues that are hard to fix without changing game elements. I have done my best to mitigate these. Heels can fall into a room with a homing enemy, and as he cannot move when falling, the enemy will be under you when you land, creating a *Jet Set Willy* death cycle. This is fixed by making the enemy wait until you land. There are other places; hopefully, I have caught them all. I don't think any *HOH* lovers will grumble about these fixes, and even if they do, most had to be fixed, in my opinion. Code-wise, it's been relatively linear, but there was a lot of planning on paper prior to creating the game, and that's helped a fair bit. Yes, we coders still use a pen and paper.

With no pressure from CRASH Towers, are you upset you did not make your self-imposed Christmas deadline?

The hope was to make it a great Christmas gift to the backers. But I will not cut corners. I want to make this the best version of the game, and I will not compromise. If it ends after Christmas, it will not be for lack of effort on my part but more because I am putting the effort in.

Rusty Pixels is not just one man - do you have shoutouts for the rest of your team?

You have me on code, of course, SpaceFractal as the musician, Simon for *HOH* and hopefully other projects (for my sins), and Lobo, who has also done a lot of graphics. Ben Baker is joining us for future work on Steam/Switch.

planeta sinclair GOTY

Article by the Planeta Sinclair
& LOAD ZX Museum.

English Revision by Clive Townsend

The origins of Planeta Sinclair's GOTY can be traced back to the blog's inception. In 2016, André Luna Leão, the sole member at the time, selected the best ZX Spectrum games of the year and crowned Einar Saukas' *Snake Escape* as the big winner. Despite limiting the selection to just five games in the GOTY category, the event's popularity soared, especially among the Spanish community. Since then, it has become a celebrated annual tradition with a strong following.



Between 2017 and 2018, the GOTY event followed a similar format as in 2016, and it continued to be widely embraced and cherished by the community. Fans shared their opinions about Planeta Sinclair's choices on social media with great interest. In 2017, the winner was *The Sword of Ianna*, the game most anticipated due to its excellence and quality. However, 2018 brought a major surprise when a horror-themed text adventure game, *Unhallowed*, emerged as the winner. It stood out from the rest of the games, elevating a genre that had long been relegated to a small niche of players. Winning the Planeta Sinclair Game of the Year undoubtedly gave it greater exposure, even among those not typically drawn to this type of game.



The Sword of Ianna, 2017 GOTY

In 2019, Planeta Sinclair made a small change. Instead of choosing only five games, they began selecting the top ten games of the year. This decision made perfect sense because not only has the number of games released annually substantially increased since 2016, but the quality of the games has also grown. It would have been unfair to only highlight a small handful of games, so the team decided to increase the number of award recipients.



Unhallowed, the unexpected winner in 2018

This decision was an instant success, with strong support from the community. It became a regular segment that was subsequently emulated by various platforms, which also began selecting their own choices for the best games of the year for the ZX Spectrum.

For the record, the big winner of 2019 was Valley of Rains, which brought the first trophy to the Russian team of ZOSYA Entertainment.



from the LOAD ZX Museum, to create an event, the Planeta Sinclair ZX Spectrum Game Awards, and a brand, the GOTY.

In 2020, there was a complete paradigm shift, thanks to *Mário Viegas*, one of the members of Planeta Sinclair, who challenged the other members of the blog - André Luna Leão and Filipe Veiga - as well as João Diogo Ramos

In that first year, the number of categories was expanded, divided between Technical (best graphics, best loading screen, and best sound), Main (puzzle, adventure, platform, action, text adventure, and BASIC), and the GOTY. The games were nominated by a prestigious international team, with an initial comprehensive list of games that would eventually culminate in five nominees for the Technical and Main categories and ten nominees for the GOTY.



Wonderful Dizzy, 2020 GOTY

The big winner of that first year was *Wonderful Dizzy*, marking the return of the Oliver Twins to the ZX Spectrum. In a very close fight with Delta's *Shadow*, it managed to come out on top. To give you an idea of how close it was, both games ended up with the same points in the final GOTY jury ranking, requiring tiebreaker criteria to determine the winner.



The GOTY team had the ambition to hold an in-person event. However, we were amid a pandemic, so it was decided to hold an online event, which did not receive any

less projection. Thus, the event was covered by national and international news outlets and was even featured on Portuguese television.



At the beginning of 2022, we were still experiencing the effects of the pandemic. So, once again, it was decided to hold an online event. There were no major changes from the previous

year, only a small change in jurors and the addition of the Special category. This category, in addition to games developed in the BASIC language, also included games from Portuguese and Spanish-speaking countries. The latter was a specific request from members of the Spanish community.

The event was equally successful as the one in 2020 and crowned the race 'n' chase game *Travel Through Time* from ZOSYA Entertainment as the big winner.



Travel Thorough Time, 2021 GOTY

This Russian team was awarded for the second time, although it was their first in the new format of the GOTY.

The winner's trophy was sent to Russia, and Natasha Zotova, the mentor of ZOSYA Entertainment, didn't hesitate to create a montage with the award. It was undoubtedly a fair victory, considered by many as the best game of the year, but also one of the best of all time for the ZX Spectrum.

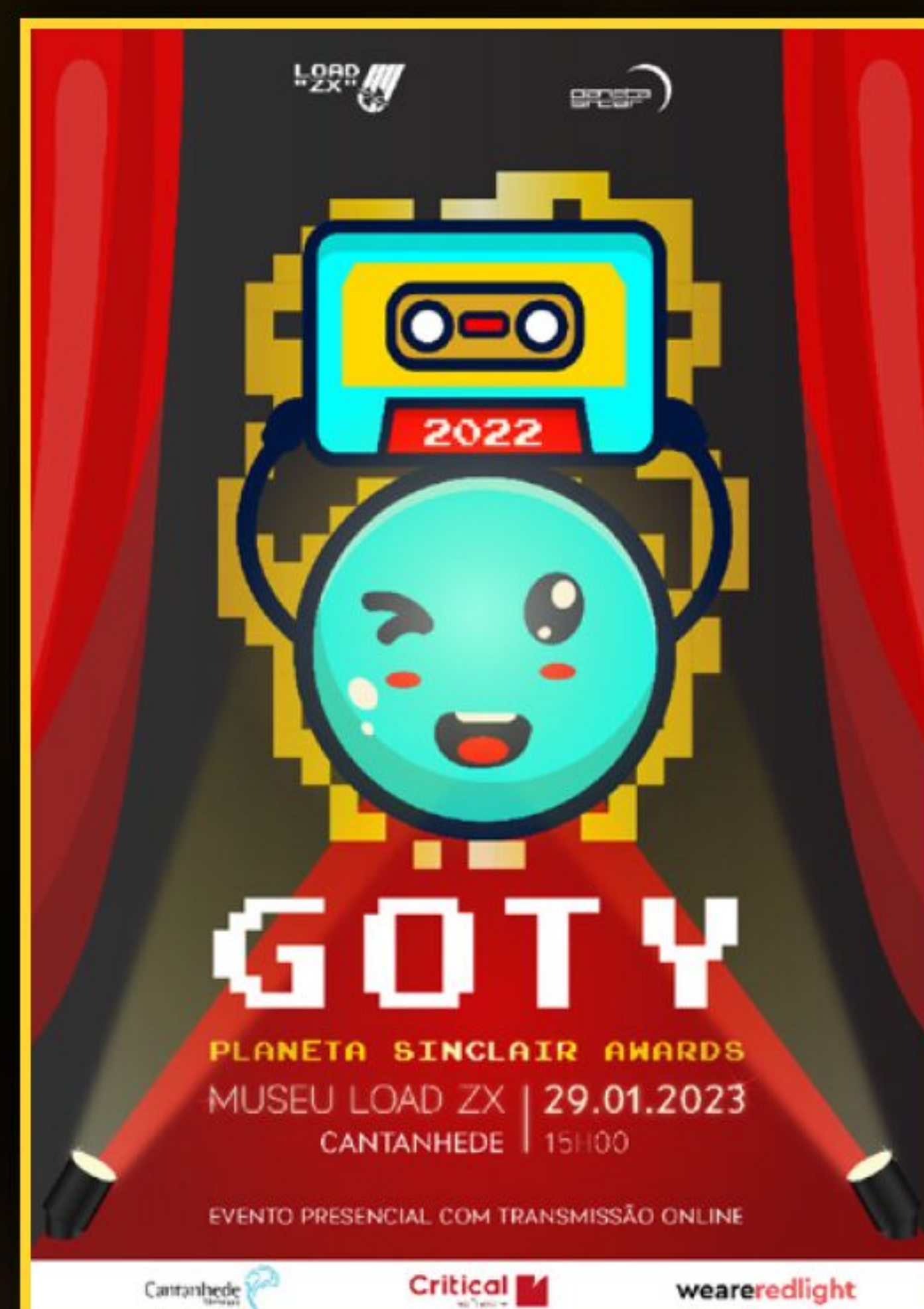


We have now reached the end of 2022. The pandemic finally seems to be over, and there are now conditions to move forward with the dream of holding a live GOTY event at the LOAD ZX Museum in Cantanhede, Portugal, with a red carpet and glamour equivalent to the Oscars, as João Diogo Ramos envisioned in private with the rest of the team.

At the end of 2022, the event team was assembled, and preparations began for the grand ceremony. It was a very ambitious

project, and for it to happen, it was necessary to obtain the support of the main partners of the LOAD ZX Museum.

Then, the logistics and operational aspects of the event were addressed.





Some necessary investments were made in the physical structure (facilities, sound, image, etc.), and the event was planned, which took place on January 29, 2023, the 43rd anniversary of the Sinclair ZX80.

To make the event even more impressive, a full day of activities at the Museum was planned. So, the afternoon was entirely dedicated to the GOTY ceremony. During the morning, various Portuguese games that had not been previously secured were preserved in real-time, with the programmers themselves in attendance. It was during that morning that the mythical City Connection 128K and other memorable games were recovered.

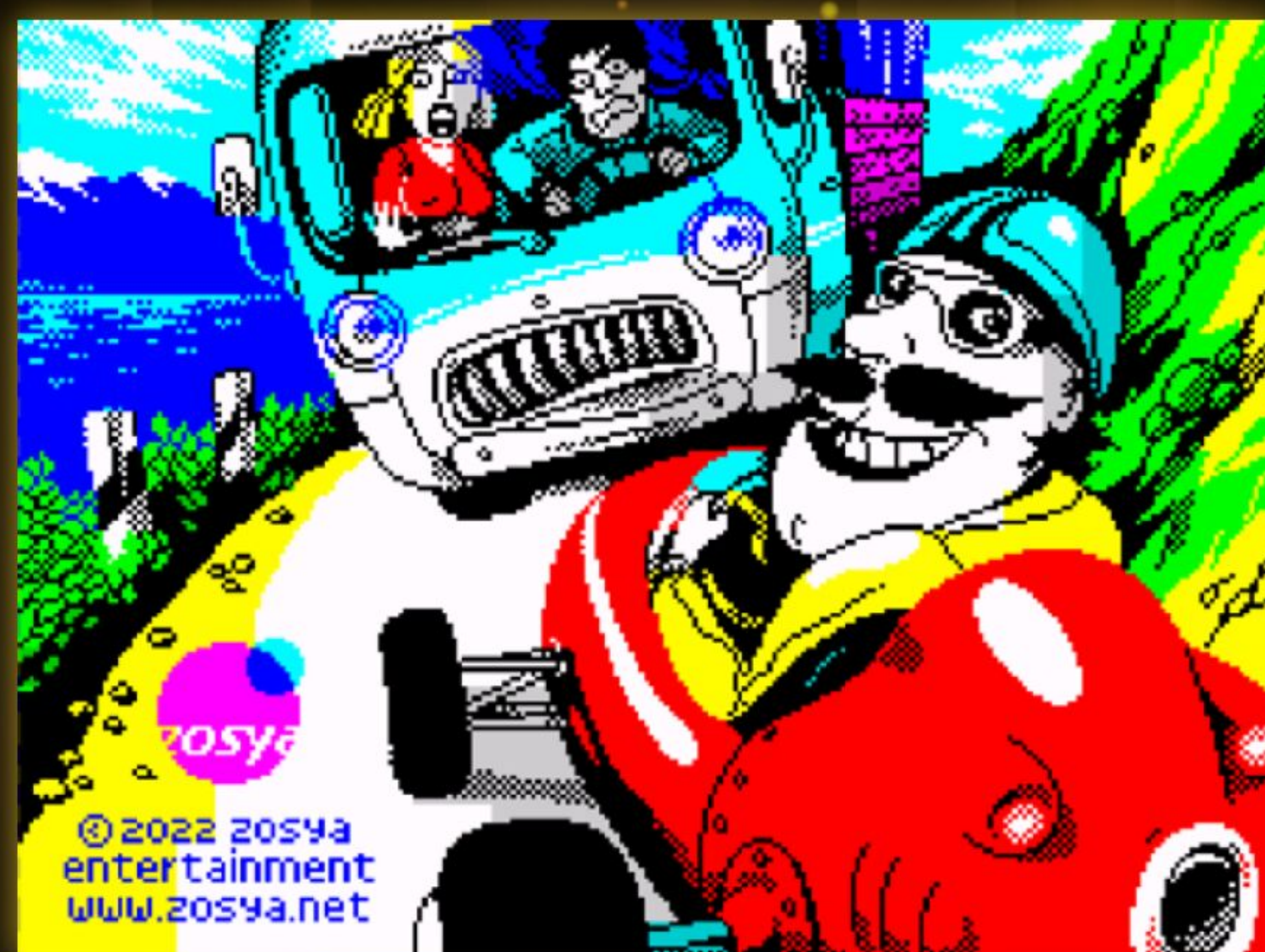
After lunch, the ceremony took place. The jury was presented, which, as in previous years, included prestigious national and international judges widely known in the ZX Spectrum community. The winners of previous years also participated in the event, with exclusive videos created for the occasion by the Oliver Twins and Natasha Zotova, among other attractions. These included the live performance of the winning game's soundtrack and the intrusion of the mysterious programmer, 'Damatta'.

Finally, the various presenters, some national and even well-known outside the ZX Spectrum scene, and others international, such as Javi Ortiz, Dave Hughes, and Clive Townsend, announced the winners of each category. The ceremony, besides being in person, was entirely broadcast on the internet, which led to a broad debate, always in cordial and friendly terms, among the many people who

watched the event remotely and left their comments in the chat.

Finally, *Rubinho Cucaracha*, another game from ZOSYA Entertainment, was declared the winner, narrowly surpassing Loxley and Ringo. It's worth saying that until the last juror's vote, any of these three games could have been crowned winner.

Two and a half hours after it began, it ended with a moment of confraternization among all those present. The bar is set very high, but we are confident that the GOTY 2023 will be even better.



Rubinho Cucaracha, 2023 GOTY 2023

TUERKAS

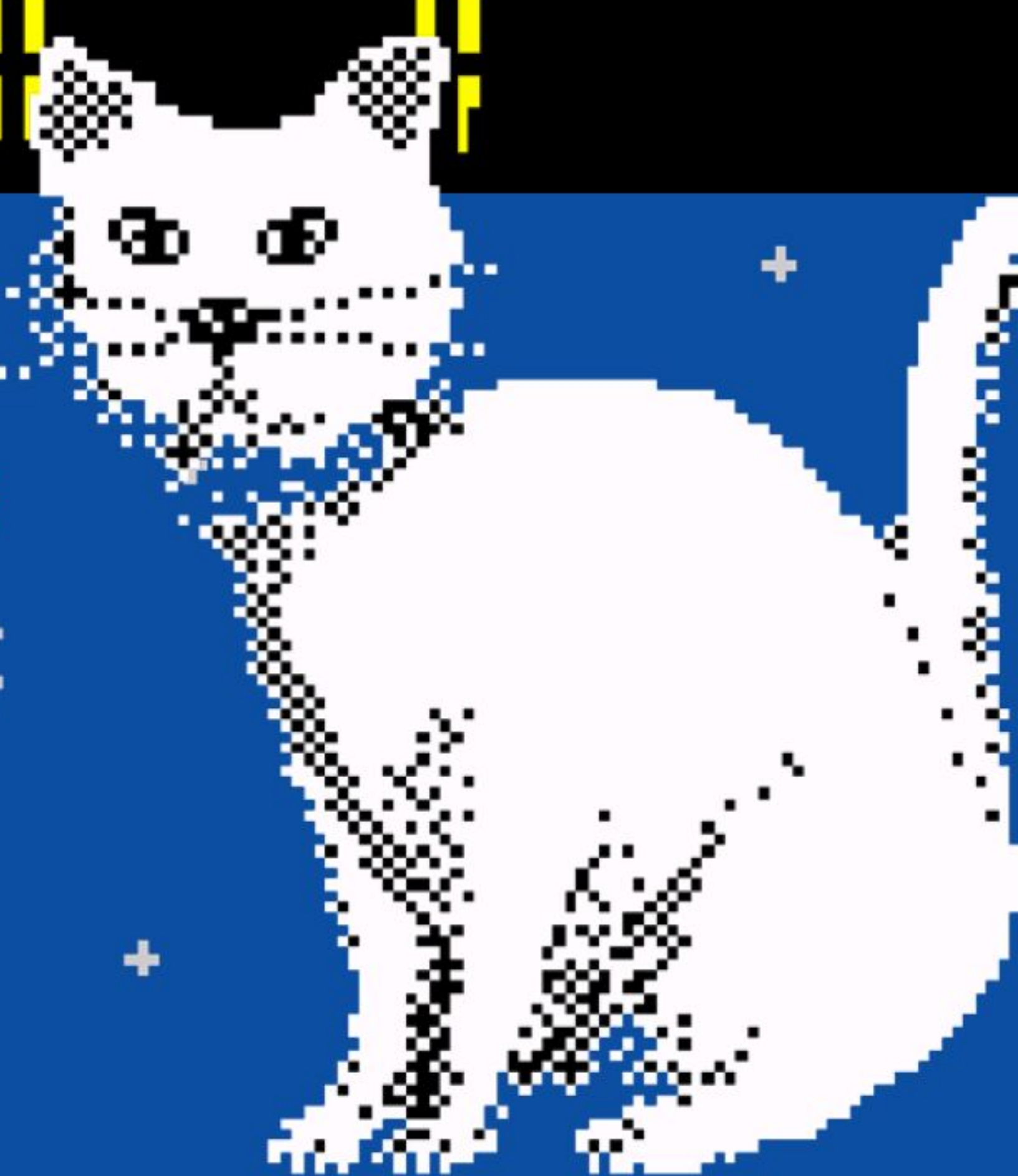
The white cat



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We all love a bit of fish on a Friday, don't we? We've been working all week, and can't be bothered cooking, so let's go to the chippy and get Britain's favourite fast food. However, the bosses in the processing factory know they've made a cock-up, as there has been some biological contamination of the fish. Although they have tried to keep it under wraps, they have realised that some of the products have already been shipped out to town. How on Earth will they reel in those issues before Bigby

Drown, the solicitor, casts his legal net over the whole fiasco? This is where Tuerkas comes into play - the company has sent him out with his hyper-sensitive nostrils to seek the funky fish before it's too late, and we have another horse-meat type scandal splodged over the news rags. With



his penchant for pungent odours, our feline friend must explore every nook and cranny in the town, and he's very adept at the task at hand; this platforming

adventure requires him to figure out how to get up to lofty heights and crawl into darkened crevasses. Of course, the feral creatures of the town do not like his presence and will try to obstruct his progress. Luckily for Tuerkas, he can spit fish bones at them or jump on their heads. There are also power-ups to be collected - these give Tuerkas the limited ability to leap higher, and it's advisable to save them with no unnecessary leaping. Aside from other animals, the town features various



Paul's Take

There are not enough cat games on the Speccy if you ask me, so I was glad to see Tuerkas when he turned up. Tuerkas is very well done with excellent detail - I particularly like the very much cat-like sit down that Tuerkas does when you've not moved him for a while. A great touch. It's a great platformer, but alas, you will come a cropper to its downright spiteful spawning routine - getting that far along in a game and having to start all the way back at the beginning again? That's a very cat-like thing to do, if you ask me.



hazards, including lightning strikes, waterfalls, rivers, and laser beams! Switches are scattered throughout the game that, when activated, turn certain things off, enabling further progression. There's a lot of 'wanda-ing' for a fish - Gerrit?

Criticism

Although you are given eight lives in the game, you will quickly realise this isn't enough and that Tuerkas is one tough kitten of a game. What's more punishing is that when you die, you return to the start screen each time, and I promise

you - this will make you swear like you never have before. However, the more you play, the more you get to grips with how the game works, and you will start to enjoy this very refreshing platformer. What shines most in the game is the impeccable level design of each screen, and - just as with a cat - you are so curious about exploring this enticing landscape and are compelled to clamber everywhere. I got nostalgic pangs - and for being a new game, that's rather odd. It's because it absolutely captures that spirit of a classic adventure from back in the heyday, and I'm impressed. It looks great, especially the brilliant animation of Tuerkas (including the subtle ones of sitting and hanging over a ledge). Tuerkas is the most Spectrumy game I've played in ages. Going back to the point on the cruel

respawning - I feel this is the thing that will put other players off, as it feels a tad frustrating.

- **Gordon King**

Comments

Tuerkas is a surprisingly fun platformer with lots of areas to explore. The graphics are top-notch, especially the movements of the cat. As it's just a 48K game, there's no in-game tune, but the little beeper ditty and sound effects are jolly enough. The real magic is because it feels very nostalgic playing this, which is odd because it's new.

Keyboard: Redefinable

Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston

Use of Computer:	85%
Graphics:	90%
Playability:	89%
Getting started:	80%
Addictive Qualities:	90%
Overall:	87%

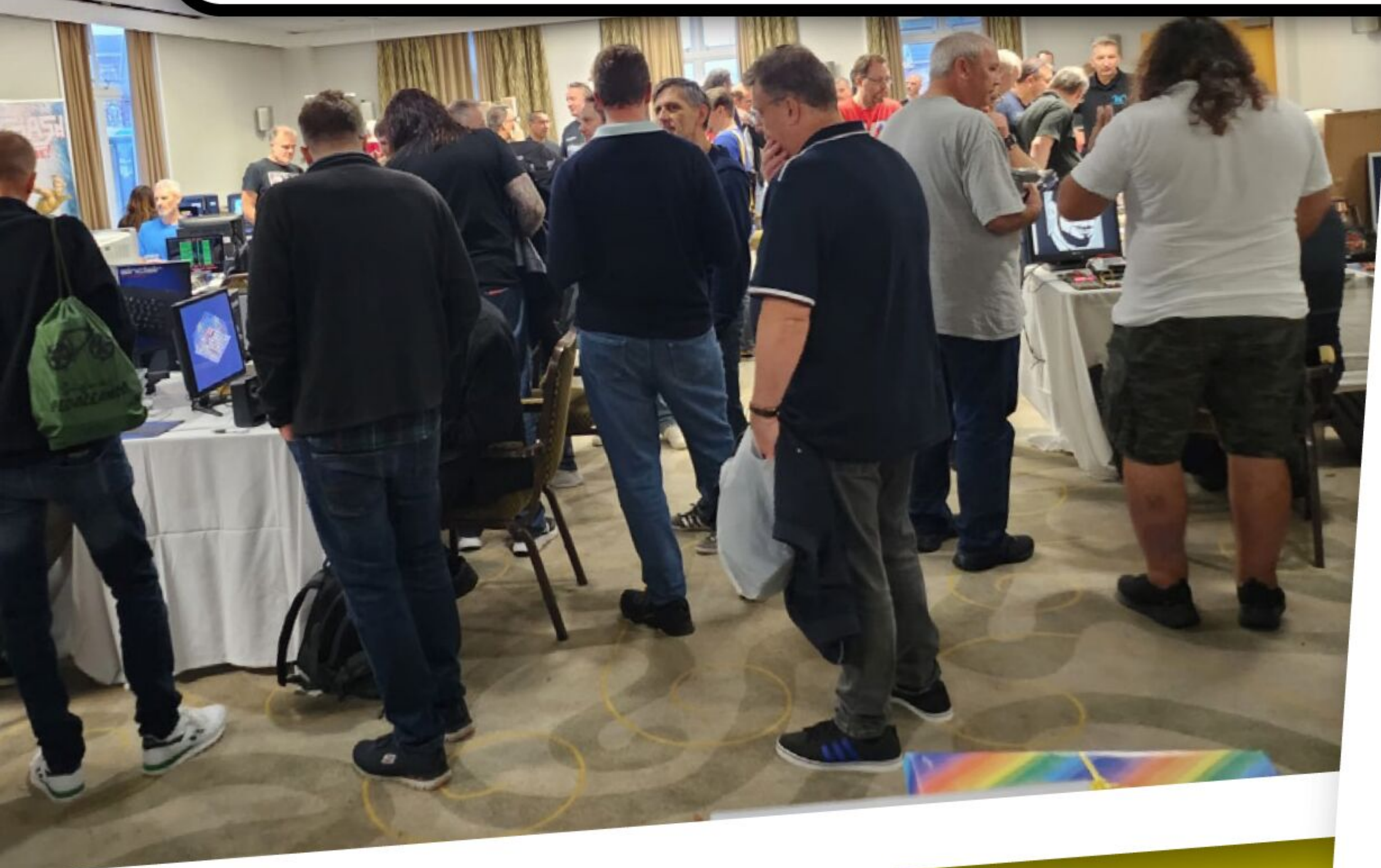


Graeme Mason gives us a round up of CRASH Live 2023

Following the success of August's ZZAP! Live, it was the turn of Spectrum fans to descend upon Kenilworth's Holiday Inn in November for Fusion's Crash Live event. For one action-packed day, the hotel heaved with attendees enjoying talks, gaming, and the many stalls selling Spectrum-related goodies.

Chris Wilkins and his team learned from ZZAP! Live: the small talk room converted into a beautiful mini arcade that brilliantly evoked the spirit of the Eighties, while the chats with various developers moved into one of the larger main rooms. Graftgold's Steve Turner and Andrew Braybrook were first up, followed by Realtime's Ian Oliver, Charles Cecil and Tony Warriner (The Road To Revolution) and a massively popular discussion with the Spectrum Next team, including Fusion's own Simon Butler. This talk was so highly anticipated Chris hastily arranged a second sitting to meet demand. Also popular was the raffle, with its top prize of a lovely white ZX Spectrum Next.

Upon entering the hotel, guests could explore a variety of stalls and displays. There was Marc Jowett of SegaMags and his fine selection of gaming magazines;





Craig Turner selling copies of his first book, *Game Not Over*; Ant Harper of RetroGear/Hidden Chest Gaming with an extensive range of Spectrum-related software and hardware; and Fusion partner, The Retro Computer Museum, displaying a lovely set of Spectrums, all fired up and ready to help fans revisit their childhood favourites.

Also in attendance was Sintech – showing off its nifty-looking handheld Spectrum – developers Midnight Brew and You Make Robots, among others, and my beautiful assistant, Claire, selling copies of my book, *ZX Nightmares*, and related merchandise. Retrogaming streaming service Antstream Arcade was also there, generously offering drinks tokens to anyone who dared to take up its novel *Horace Goes Skiing* challenge – how many times could you get run over by an

ambulance inside two minutes? It's harder than it sounds, and the fun continued into the evening with an exclusive showing of Anthony and Nicola Caulfield's highly-anticipated documentary on the world's finest microcomputer, *The Rubber Keyed Wonder*.

From start to finish, Chris and his colleagues ensured the whole day ran smoothly and was enjoyed by everyone in attendance. Both ZZAP! Live's and CRASH Live's successes have guaranteed the events will continue next year, so mark the date in your calendar for CRASH Live 2024: Saturday, 23rd November.

Plans are already in motion for new guests and attractions – to keep up with all CRASH-related developments, head over to the CRASH Annual and Magazine group on Facebook.





When there's something that doesn't quite make sense in the world of the ZX Spectrum, **Martyn Carroll** goes looking for answers. In this issue, it's all about the joy of sticks!

Like everyone, I remember Spectravideo's QuickShot II joystick. How could I forget – I got through several of them. One was destroyed by *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*, another was killed by *Combat School*, and a third was hung, drawn, and quartered by *Hyper Sports*. You get the idea. While the QuickShot II was a fine-looking stick, and featured a handy auto-fire option, it was also rather delicate and would often fail after forceful waggling.

I'm not here to moan about the QuickShot II's infamous build quality (although it's hardly surprising that Spectravideo only supplied them with ninety-day warranties). What I want to explore is what came next. I knew about the original QuickShot, which was launched in 1982 and claimed to be "the world's first ergonomic joystick". But then, one day in the late 80s, I visited a market in Birmingham and spotted a QuickShot IX. That's right. A *QuickShot NINE*. And it wasn't a joystick but a surprising trackball-type thing. This was eye-opening. This was like loving the first two *Police Academy* movies but never knowing that *Citizens on Patrol* and *Assignment Miami Beach* even existed. So, for my own gratification, indulge me as I try and find out more about the later QuickShots.

What do you mean, Mahoney bailed after the fourth one?

THE INVESTIGATION

There's not much information about these devices online, bar some scant details and a few photos from people's collections. But I quickly discovered the reason why I'd never heard of the QuickShot III before – it was developed specially for the ColecoVision. This unusual stick combines a numeric keypad (a feature of the console's official controller) with a joystick featuring two independent fire buttons. It's as strange as it sounds, and it only gets stranger. The QuickShot IV is an Atari-standard stick, like the first two, but it's actually a QuickShot I in disguise. What Spectravideo did was redesign it to support three interchangeable 'shafts' – the first looked like a QuickShot I, the second looked like a Competition Pro, the third looked like a Cadbury's Mini Roll. The idea was that you could "match the grip with the gameplay". It was a stretch. Moving on, the QuickShot V was presumably another solution to unsold stock, as it's basically a re-jigged III that's compatible with the Atari standard. The main difference is that the numeric keypad has been replaced by a comically oversized fire button. Honestly, it's the type of button an 80s POTUS might press to initiate World War III. It's ridiculous, but at the same time quite cool.

Spectravideo had clearly lost the plot by this point, so it wisely returned to what had worked before – namely "the world's best-selling joystick" (their words, not mine), the QuickShot II. As we know, the original wasn't the most durable device, so in 1985 its internals were redesigned

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The original QuickShot promised "single-handed" success, thanks to "sure foot suction cups"



Three variants of the original QuickShot. The white one was designed to match the colour of Spectravision's own MSX-based computer range.

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Performance? This ad for the QuickShot II Turbo looks like it was devised by Durex.



The QuickShot II was a hugely popular stick for Spectravision. (Photo: Colin Woodcock)



Exhibition pieces. Here's the QuickShot III (right) and V on display at the Helsinki Computer and Game Console Museum.

CRASH Investigates



Behold the mighty QuickShot V and its "enlarged firing pad".



This is it, the device young Carroll spotted back in the 80s on a market stall.



Spectravideo loved its joysticks. It even stuck one on its SV-318 computer. (Photo: Igor Clukas)



The QuickShot II Turbo features a narrower, redesigned base for better grip.



The QuickShot VII... can you imagine trying to play Manic Miner with this?



The QuickShot IX was available in two colour schemes, with the grey/red one featuring Sigma branding.

to use microswitches instead of those prone-to-failure 'dome' switches. The result was the QuickShot II Plus, which looked exactly the same as the regular model, but now featured that telltale click-click-click sound as you played. The following year it was tweaked once more to create a 'Turbo' version that featured a sleeker, red-coloured base and dimpled side grips.

While the II line became a separate offshoot, Spectravideo continued to release new models. Next up was the QuickShot VII (don't worry, I've not skipped one, there's no evidence of a QuickShot VI even being released, but something was presumably prototyped). The VII is an odd little device, dubbed as a "joycard controller", but it looks more like a panic button you might press if you're stuck on the toilet in an assisted living home. The circular red 'button' is actually the controller which you rotate using your thumb, and there are a pair of fire buttons at the top (which cause small LED lights to pulse when you press them). This was followed by the QuickShot IX, which I mentioned in the intro and was responsible for kickstarting this caper. Again, there is seemingly no QuickShot VIII, but the IX is available in two colour schemes – grey/red and cream/brown – and the former was once advertised in a Spanish mag as the VIII, so who knows? Either way, the device was marketed as a "Joyball Controller", but despite its looks it's not a trackball like you'd use to play *Missile Command* and *Marble Madness* in the arcades. Instead, you place your palm over the ball and basically tilt it. It's interesting, but not in a good way.

The IX was the last Atari-standard device, but Spectravideo didn't stop there. The QuickShot X was a stumpy stick designed specifically for IBM PCs, while the

QuickShot XII was a joystick for the Nintendo NES console based on the II. Similarly, the QuickShot XV was the same as the II but for the Sega Master System, and the QuickShot XVI was a version of the IX "joyball" for the same console. After that, Spectravideo dropped the numbered releases, replacing them with names like Maverick, Starfighter and Flightgrip. It also launched the QuickJoy range, which features some even more outlandish designs. Google the QuickJoy V Superboard if you want a giggle.

THE OUTCOME

Besides the QuickShot I, II, II Plus, and II Turbo that you're no doubt familiar with, there were a further four models that you could use with your Spectrum. The fact that no-one seemed to speak volumes – although their kitsch appeal means they're of interest to collectors these days. Total QuickShot sales reportedly topped 42 million, and while we can joke about 41.9 million of them being sacrificed at the altar of *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*, that's still an impressive achievement.

Thank you to Benjamin Jose Grimm for providing information and photos.

QuickShot



FOREST ESCAPE

A Knight's Quest



IrataHack

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It's a month of sequels - well, at least two - with Tenebra getting a sequel and now we see the return of another game and a character that received a warm welcome from CRASH back in issue 15. Wee Knight returns! *A Castle Escape* leads to only one thing, a *Forest Escape*... well, that's where you'll find most castles, I guess.

The forest is mystical, enchanting, and wild, and you may have also seen this coming, it's rather dangerous, too. Wee Knight has his work cut

out for him as he bids to navigate the forest, collecting as many coins as he can, along with keys that open up the four

chests containing precious treasures, whilst evading the nasty bats, spiders, and perilous falls before he can make his escape.

Criticism

Forest Escape follows in the same vein as *Castle Escape* looks-wise and playability-wise, with Wee Knight plodding along the ground, stomping as he goes, nimbly jumping from platform to platform, and collecting items along the way. The game's graphics are colourful and bright, though with no in-game music, you have to rely on spot FX to keep you going sound-wise.

Littered throughout the levels are various coloured mushrooms, with each having a specific effect on Mr. Knight. These vary from slowing him down and speeding him up, whilst others will reverse your controls, which I found to be the most awkward to master. Luckily, in some cases, these effects are temporary, meaning you'll be back to your wee self before you know it and you can get on with your task.





All profits go to ADPKD (autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease) charity.

That said, the aesthetics of the game are very pleasing and although Mr Knight can be a little slow he walks along, he does so in a nicely-animated way. Additionally, the art that adorns the menu screen is... well, it's a work of art. Expertly drawn by Speccy graphics genius Craig Stephenson, it's jaw-droppingly good, and will have you gawping at it for a very long time. Simply stunning.



- **Paul Davies**

As pretty and as well-made as *Forest Escape* is, I can't help but be slightly disappointed with the areas where it lacks. Enemy variants are few, with only spiders and bats to contend with. The addition of other creatures would have been most welcome here and given the game a more

established feel - the same can be said for the rooms, too. All too often, I found myself thinking that this new room I had entered didn't really offer me anything different to the one that preceded it, leaving a lot of them seem quite samey and, on occasions, made me lose a little interest.

Gordon's Take

I was charmed with *Forest Escape's* predecessor, loving the animations and the sometimes challenging (borderline unforgiving) platform leaping. Perhaps some of the allure is now diluted, with the sequel offering little beyond the original. It's still a very competent and enjoyable game, and I won't take that away from it - it's just more of the same but not quite as good. I find the screens a lot busier and, therefore, more frustrating when trying to jump without hitting my head. It still looks gorgeous, and that animation of the little knight is superb. The jewel in the crown, however, is that glorious loading screen - that is the artwork of witchcraft, that is. Oh, and thanks for putting the *Teddy Bears' Picnic* tune in my head - it took years to exorcise that from my mind after playing Bear Bovver.



Comments

Graphics are crisp and bright... and did I mention that menu screen? For the sound, we get a 'nice' rendition of *Teddy Bears' Picnic* on the menu screen, with minimal sounds during gameplay. Whilst still a decent game overall, there's a distinct lack of ambition to offer more than *Castle Escape* already gave us. More attention to detail and more creative level layouts would have done much to improve things.

Keyboard: Q,A,O,P,M

Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston

Use of Computer:	80%
Graphics:	80%
Playability:	80%
Getting started:	81%
Addictive Qualities:	82%
Overall:	81%

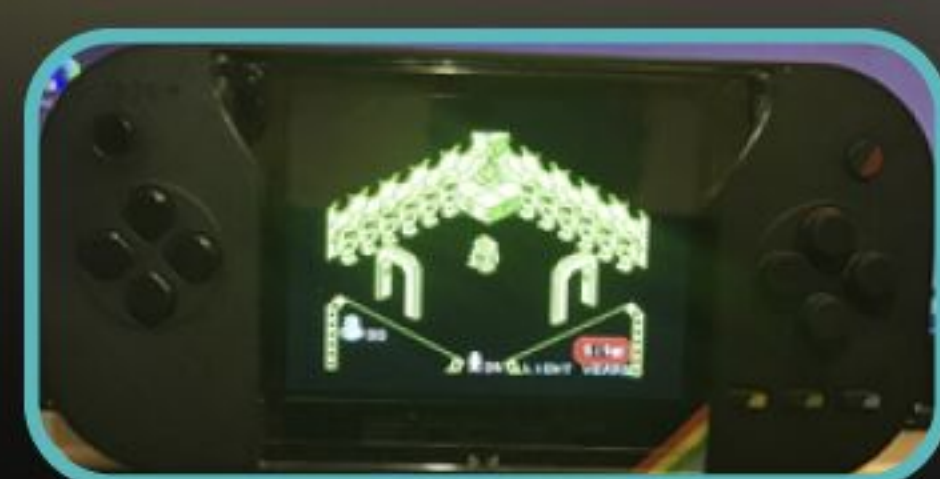


ZX-TOUCH

We've all had dreams of having a handheld Speccy in our lifetime, and due to one thing or another, it's not actually happened successfully. Recently, a new player entered the fray attempting to fill the void - the ZX Touch. Friend of CRASH and 'King of the Beeper', Rich Hollins, jumped at the opportunity to own one after seeing it live, so we asked him if he'd like to tell us what he thought of it. He, of course, said 'yes', the nice chap. Here are his thoughts on the handheld.

I'd had an inkling about the ZX Touch a few months ago as some of the games I'd worked on with Team Moritz were chosen to be included with it - a console made purely to play ZX Spectrum software, and nothing else, and branded as such. It did come as a big surprise to see one in the flesh at CRASH Live, though, and I spent a fair amount of time hanging around the Sintech stand trying it out. I ordered a unit there and then, and it promptly arrived a few days later, being one of only a small amount destined for the UK initially.

For me, it's always been a joy to have a handheld portable Spectrum to use on holiday or the train, and I already use a hacked Sony PSP running FUSE, a Nintendo DS with a Speccy emulator, and even a modified Vega+ on which I managed to improve the buttons.



Some alternatives to the ZX Touch

SO HOW DOES THE ZX COMPARE?

My first impressions were very good, although I did have to order a USB-C lead and find a micro SD card, as neither was included in the package - considering the asking price was £219, I did think that at least a charging lead could've been included. The packaging is not bad (although not up to the glossy standard of other products, such as the Next), and the user manual is well-written and easy to understand.



It has a lovely, bright, crystal clear 7" touchscreen and lots of config options in the easy-to-use user interface, and I found the menu system very easy to get to grips with. Of course, I dived in without reading the manual and still managed to access all the features without issues, which I took as a good sign. I already had a micro SD card full of TAP files to try, which were immediately recognised by the ZX Touch, regardless of their location on the card.

The console feels sturdy and well-made, manufactured by a company called Elmar Electronic in Croatia. Maybe it could've been styled a bit more Speccy-like, but it's still quite distinctive and attractive. It comes with 22 games pre-installed, all good quality recent homebrew titles such as *Buzzsaw*, *Sword of Ianna*, *Bufonada*, and *Exo-tical*.



The ZXT includes an SD-Card slot, a 3.5mm jack, a USB-C port and a power button but no volume buttons.

It's packaged with the 'Nine Tiles Networks Ltd' ROM from 1981 for licensing reasons, so once you add your own games onto your SD card, it's a good idea to add a 48K and 128K Sinclair ROM file for compatibility. These are really easy to find online, and I just copied the ones from the FUSE emulator on my PC into a 'ROMs' folder on the SD card. This is all explained in the manual, and I had no issues at all getting my own games to play - file formats supported are TAP, SNA, and TRD.

A wealth of menu options are available to adjust the joystick and keyboard input, screen size/layout (including ULA+ support), sound configuration, and a very novel option of lights all around the console, which can be set to respond to border colour changes or AY sound.

On playing with the ZX Touch, I found it great fun and charming to use and have returned to it a lot since getting it. The only issue I did find disappointing was the emulation of beeper sound and AY music with buzzer FX. Some of the modern beeper engines used in my music for games such as *Xenoblast*, *Down the Pipe*, and *Superhair* have a very unpleasant carrier noise, which

is not present on other emulators such as FUSE or Spectaculator. I've already mentioned this to Thomas at Sintech, and he assures me that firmware updates will be available to fix issues like this. The system uses a custom-built emulator with a separate sound mixer, which improves high-frequency sound but does seem to have introduced the beeper noise issues.

So, all in all, a very competent, well-made ZX Spectrum handheld console with a battery life of around six hours. It is a little expensive, especially with other options available (such as the Sony PSP, Nintendo DS, or Nintendo Switch), but has the benefit of working out of the box with no hacking involved, and it's very easy to add new games.



My overall feeling is I'm very pleased I bought it, and I've seen other owners on the Speccy Facebook groups feel the same way as I do. It's now become my go-to device for a quick portable Speccy fix.

If you fancy getting your hands on one, visit Sintech at: <https://on.mom/ucKJ> and press all the relevant buttons. Thank you, Mr Hollins!



Fresh from CRASH Live and what looks to be a successful launch of the Kickstarter 2 machines, we're delighted to have this month's NEXT editorial written by Game Artist and Designer for W.A.S.P, **Phoebus Dokos**, to share his thoughts about the current state of NEXT development.

It's time for a new issue of Crash, and time for me to write a few things. Honestly, I did struggle originally when the time came to put pen to paper (or fingers on keyboard; you take your pick) but then I realized I was just at the latest Crash Live and that's all the excuse any given guy would need to write for Crash magazine!



It was a fantastic show, not strictly Sinclair-based and with a very good vibe; felt like a marked improvement over last year's which I also attended. To me (and us members of the Next team) Crash Live was also a milestone; we were finally able to show off the culmination of 3 years of efforts and give to people a real hands-on experience of what the KS2 Next feels like. There were Next give-aways which

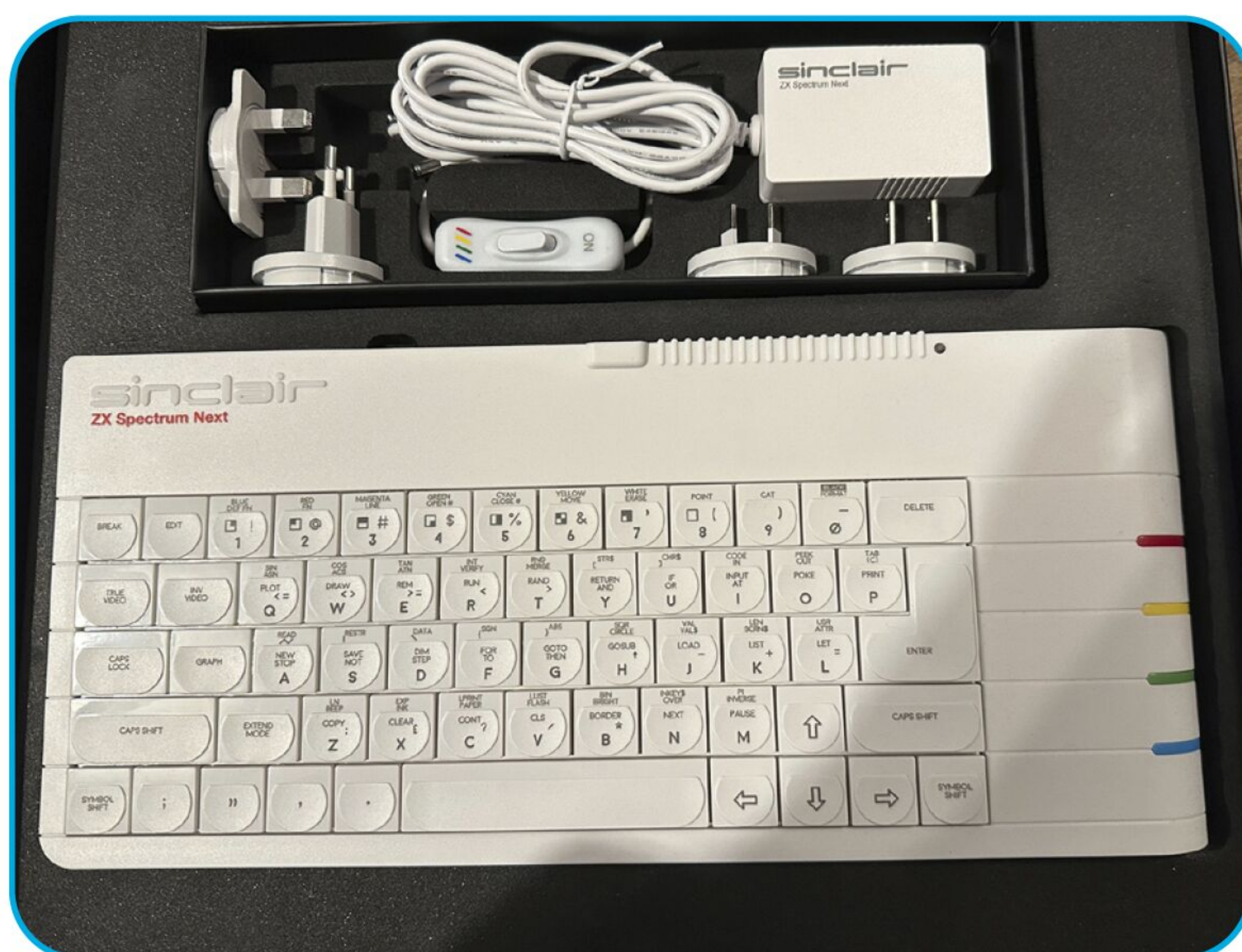
made attending a bit more rewarding, but also real reasons to attend; we saw new hardware, tons of new software (apart from the Next-only ones; another trend that's accelerating and it's a real cause for joy). As you're reading these lines, the ones amongst you that backed the second kickstarter, you should already have your Nexts connected and doing what we designed them to do; be a retro computer that's interesting; useful and entertaining.

Some naysayers said 7 years ago (and they still do today) that there's no point in the Next's existence;



that couldn't be further from the truth! What I see everyday, is a thriving community using their Nexts to keep with their

favourite hobby, making new games (not necessarily with Next features), enjoy classic and new games alike and for the first time in many years, learning something again the way it's supposed to be learned. Crash was there in the beginning and it will be here for this second coming of the Spectrum supporting the inquisitive user and showing all new developments in the Spectrum world.





TX-1696



Next newcomers 'Lucky Red Fish' have been making waves at events and on YouTube throughout 2023, with footage and opportunities to play their R-Type-inspired horizontal space shooter, TX-1696. Controlling the Taris Xavia spacecraft, players must traverse a series of alien worlds, taking out wave after wave of enemy creatures and mechanical monstrosities with the myriad of power-ups available. Featuring multi-directional parallax scrolling, a pseudo-polygonal sprite artwork style with detailed movement animations, and huge boss fights, it's certainly shaping up to be a premium arcade-like experience for the now-approaching 8000 Next owners and equal number of gamers now getting into Next gaming via the numerous clones. With some gameplay tweaks to address the high difficulty some of us have experienced when trying out the demo, this could be one to watch.

- Craig Turner





TARGET: RENEGADE

We've been lucky to get our mitts on the demo of the Spectrum Next version of *Target: Renegade*. Before you all pass out, it's still in early development, but level one is fully playable, bringing back fond memories of slugging it out in a multi-storey car park.





The best brawler on the Spectrum has had the makeover it deserves, but at the same time, it retains its original looks but is adorned with an expanded colour palette and smoother animation frames. It's fair to say that developer W.A.S.P. has tried to stay as faithful to the original as possible but is giving it that next-gen lift that keeps sight of what a Spectrum game looks like. Just check out those lush screenshots. How incredible does all this look? Well, we can also confirm it plays just as well - those sledge hammers still make you say "ooft!" when they make contact with a baddie. We cannot wait to hear the music and sound effects in this; the original highlighted how amazing the AY-3-8912 could be, thanks to the talented Gari Biasillo. Their website just says "coming soon", so we all need to have a little patience.

- Gordon King





The way of the exploding fist



W.A.S.P. Studio

£13 / £21 Physical • 12/2024 • NEXT

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Long before the prime days of the arcade tournament fighter in the wake of *Street Fighter 2*, opportunities to give your buddies a virtual black eye were limited. Though there were some real stinkers (*SF1* anyone?), there was the odd 8-bit hit to be found. Uncharacteristically for the era, some of the best didn't come from the arcade. Even gamers with only a passing interest in digital combat will attest to the brilliance that found its way onto the humble Spec back in 1985, with the arrival of *Way of the Exploding Fist* from Melbourne House. Inspired in no small way by Data East's martial arts arcade game *Karate Champ*, the game was a massive smash that year and remained the platform's go-to fighter for years.

35 years later, the bods at W.A.S.P. Studio have taken the capabilities of the Next and used it to bring us an updated version of the O.G. Speccy fighter. Reportedly reworked from the unreleased Amiga port, the game was teased at various points in the last

few years and has been a hotly anticipated perk of the second Next Kickstarter campaign.

Criticism

On the face of it, the work done on *WOTEF* has brought the game up to date. The graphics are a leap above the already impressive-for-the-time Spec original, with beautifully colourful renditions of the familiar oriental garden and dojo backdrops, with the new statue, sunset, and Mount Fuji settings adding variety. The HUD is presented with bamboo framework and a custom kanji-styled font choice, and the fighters

themselves really pop from the scenery with their varied, full-colour sprites, far surpassing the detail of the monochrome originals.

Presentation-wise, the whole game gets an overhaul. The original had nothing beyond a rolling demo once loaded, whereas this new version has a proper title screen, high score tables, options menu, and game over screens. Two-player mode is now selectable from the title screen, with difficulty options, a controls/keymap demo, and even player colour customisations available. All this is set to some appropriately oriental music.



Gordon's Take

I prefer my Next games to retain the essence of the Spectrum - this is even more important for me when a classic game is getting a makeover. I'm delighted that WOTEF still feels and plays like it did back in the day. If you showed someone this game who hadn't played it since 1985, they'd recognise it immediately. It's updated in all the right places and feels much more fluid than the original.



When it comes to gameplay, players may feel somewhat undecided.

The game retains the same move set and control scheme of the original, although with a more responsive and less laboured response time than the original. This may initially throw players used to the classic timings of the original.

Turning around to face an opponent and jumping are executed by precisely timed button and direction taps, with directional jumps counter-intuitively initiated by downward diagonals. It would have been better if the game could have made more use of the multi-button controllers available for the Next, to allow for more intuitive movement

and perhaps independent punch and kick commands, as worked so well on *International Karate Advanced* for the GBA. That felt like a natural evolution of how these types of games should

control and would have particularly benefited the more readily accessible versus mode.



There's also a noticeable issue with both the collision detection and scoring system that makes some matches feel unfair, as cheap and easy blows are awarded full points for making questionable contact, while more complex moves like the roundhouse and particularly the leg sweep seem to completely whiff the opponent despite

being precise hits, and only scoring half points for the frustrated repeat efforts.

All things considered, *WOTEF* is a solid Next title that will certainly be welcomed by original backers who can enjoy the game for free or at a reduced cost. Gameplay problems could affect long-term enjoyment of the game, particularly as a multiplayer experience. Hopefully, the developers will consider a future deluxe version to fix these various niggles, but as a fan of fighting games for many decades, there has to be a point penalty for missing the mark on the chance to enhance the combat fluidity.

- **Craig Turner**

Comments

Visually, this is a good take on a classic, re-tooled for a modern Sinclair machine. Music is suitably stereotypical and can be turned off and on. Whilst the gameplay lacks any real enhancements, this is a worthy first system fighter and should be eagerly welcomed by Kickstarter backers.

Keyboard: **Q,A,O,P, / Redef.**
Joystick: **Kempston / MD**

Use of Computer:	75%
Graphics:	85%
Playability:	80%
Getting started:	85%
Addictive Qualities:	75%
Overall:	80%

Paul Davies takes a look at a game which escaped the gaze of the original CRASH team.

BOSCONIAN EIGHTY SEVEN

Binary Design

£ 1.99 • 1987 • 48K / 128K

Bosconian 87 is a new one on me - and CRASH, it turns out - as it's one of those games that gets a bit of love amongst many, but sadly it did not pass through my hands when I was knee-deep in Speccyness in my foremost years. It's so new to me that, in fact, I had to be told that it was initially an arcade game (thanks, Gordon!), as being the young spring chicken that I am (well, compared to the rest of the CRASH team anyway *runs away*), I never even got to play it there. 'It's brilliant!' they all said. 'Better than the arcade version!' they also said, and more importantly, 'It's head and shoulders above the Commodore 64 version!' they said. Well, that's a given, surely?

The game's plot is a simple and somewhat familiar one involving aliens and them being up to no good,

waging war on humans and destroying what they can of Earth whilst enslaving any remaining humans. Blast those aliens! (Which incidentally, is the aim of the game) Safely ensconced inside your Starfighter ship, you take to the skies, well, space, to destroy the enemy bases and spaceships in each zone before moving on to the next one and repeating until death. Basically, it's a game of flying around and blowing the crap out of anything you see. I think I may enjoy this one.

Criticism

When loaded, *Bosconian 87* gripped me instantly with its quality tune - upbeat and with elements of those space-themed TV shows you used to watch back in the '60s. Excellent stuff. Another great thing about the tune

is that it plays constantly throughout gameplay too, only adding to the overall fun of the game as a whole. To the right of the screen is a top-down view where the game takes place, and to the left is a map where you'll find the alien bases that need destroying - as well as any incoming alien crafts.

Once you get moving, there is no time to stop as your ship doesn't stop, so you have to be on your toes and nimble with the controls as you navigate the rather full area of Space that you find yourself in. There are mini asteroids, small rocks, and mines that all need avoiding - or shooting - or else your mission will be a short one. Elsewhere, you'll come across extra lives, fuel, bombs, and power-ups, all of which are pretty essential given the hazards you encounter along the way. Amongst the stars you'll also find



larger ships, in which you can dock and modify your lasers, meaning you can fire multiple lasers at the same time which in turn makes life easier when attempting to blow things up, whether they are stationary or moving. Aside from enemy bases, you also have to take on the alien spaceships, which, and let's be honest with each other here, are a lot harder to deal with than their respective bases.

The bases are tricky enough to destroy with having to dodge the rockets they fire whilst shooting their core for ultimate destruction, but hey, at least they don't come flying at you Kamikaze-style! I mean, there you are, bumbling along, minding your own business, collecting extra lives, and blowing the odd alien base to smithereens, and what should happen out of the blue? Argh! (Very fast) Alien spaceships - and they're heading in your direction! When they're solitary, you can deal with them relatively easily, but then...*ALARM!

ALARM! ALARM!* FORMATION ATTACK!! What does 'FORMATION ATTACK' mean when you see it pop up in the corner of the screen? You soon find out when you blink and your ship has been destroyed. Chaos! Indeed, you have to get those nimble fingers out again to avoid the Red Arrows-like alien formation attacking display, turning left, right, left, right, and then possibly left again, all whilst trying to shoot back and trying not to CRASH into an asteroid - it's frantic stuff.

Bosconian 87 is just as Gordon King described - an arcade game in its truest sense. No big complicated mission to try and overcome, but a game of pure fun, and a challenge to try and get the highest score you can. It's also another one of those games that Mastertronic somehow managed to knock out and only charge £1.99 for. How did they do it? Whilst some



of their releases at a price of just £1.99 would still be considered a rip-off, this one certainly isn't. It's a triumph, and I'm glad that it's now in my library of Speccy games.

- Paul Davies

Comments

Graphics are pretty simple, but colourful and bold, whilst for audio we're treated to an excellent soundtrack and equally excellent spot FX - I love the exploding sound! Whilst sometimes you will shout a few expletives (see FORMATION ATTACK), this is an arcade game for the ages. Fun, fast, frantic, and will have you coming back for more.

Keyboard: Q,A,O,P, SPACE

Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston

Use of Computer:	84%
Graphics:	83%
Playability:	89%
Getting started:	88%
Addictive Qualities:	90%
Overall:	88%

CRASH *Back* Issue 19

Paul Davies straps on his rose-tinted glasses and takes us back to CRASH of yesteryear.



How did The Beach Boys put it?

'If everybody had an ocean, across the USA. Then everybody'd be surfin', like in a forty-eight K'

Something like that.

Who'd have thought that The Beach Boys would have predicted the advent of the Spectrum 48K+, and who'd have thought that this prediction would have

led Oli Frey to pay tribute to California's famous sons, by dedicating this month's cover to them? As cool as it looks, it's not something I'd try - the last I heard, Speccies are NOT, I repeat, NOT waterproof. Besides, who's got feet small enough to fit on a Speccy+? Not I!

Inside, I'm very surprised to see that there's a 64K Spectrum. Not quite, though the

index explains that Mikro-Gen has a new add-on that will allow them to create bigger games and for us to play bigger games. What kind of games can we look forward to? I hope the article will allow us to find out. Elsewhere, Oli has kindly prepared a pull-out poster for us, and it seems it's fighting-related. He loves a bit of violence, doesn't he? But let's get to what we always look forward to each month - games! What have we got to get excited about (or not) this month?

Hold up! There's some big news first! Roger Kean is leaving! No! He explains in his editorial that this issue is his final one as editor, and he is handing over the reins to Grame Kidd. A worthy replacement, but what now for Roger? He's gone to edit ZZAP! 64 instead?? Blasphemy! Of course not, Roger has taken over at ZZAP! as Chris Anderson has left Newsfield, so his boots needed to be filled, and who better than Roger to fill those? Good luck, Roger!

The very first game to present itself this month is *Nodes of Yesod* from Odin Computer Graphics. Set on the Earth's moon, you control a spaceman named Charlemagne "Charlie" Fotheringham-Grunes, who has volunteered himself to go on a voyage deep inside the moon to seek out and collect the mysterious Monolith, which is emitting signals to the Earth. What kind of signals, we don't know, but I guess if you can get hold of the Monolith,





it may be a little easier to work out. Charlie can walk, jump, and roll his way around the bumpy surface and multiple tunnels found underneath as bounds along on his quest. There are many enemies out there too, as you would imagine, though one creature is present that sticks out the most - the lunar mole. The lunar mole is a friendly mammal with the most damage they can do being chewing through the walls of the caverns. Those teeth must be damn sharp! There are a few references to *Underwulde* in the reviewers' comments in terms of looks, but Nodes of Yesod does seem to have its own style and personality to make it stand out enough from Ultimate's release; so much so that it's got itself a CRASH Smash this month with 93% overall. Nice work, Charlie!

Bob, weave, duck, swing, bob, weave, duck, swing - no, these are not instructions on how to knit

a lovely scarf, it's an introduction to the next game I've come across on these pages. It's *Frank Bruno's Boxing*, and Frank Bruno's boxing his way to the championship title with this one.

All he has to do is follow my prior instructions, and he'll get there in no time,



or if not, he may end up with a nice pair of knitted gloves instead. With the recent release of *Rocky*, it seems Elite has been inspired to get their bruising boxing game out too, though they may hold a slight advantage here by having the benefit



of a household name to work with - and we all love big Frank, right? But is just having Frank involved enough to make the game better than *Rocky*? There's a lot more than just having Frank that makes this better, says CRASH. There are more moves, the game is more fluid and runs a lot quicker too, and it has a host of different fighters to

take on, each with their own personalities and fighting style. Sounds like a belt-er. This game is surely a knockout and definitely not rope-y. Ok, I'll stop messing a-round now and see what

else I can squeeze in to look at this month.

From one sport to another. Well, if you can call it a sport, and luckily for us, it's just an advert this time. It's *Jack Charlton's Match Fishing*. It has 'Unique multi-player action' and is, and I quote, from the great man himself, 'All the excitement of a real fishing match and you don't have to get your feet wet'. Surely getting your feet wet would be the only exciting part of fishing? Plus, why is he watching



a family playing it on a Commodore 64? Pfft. Jack, you were already pushing it by banging on about how great fishing is, but now you've gone too far having that horrible brown thing in your advert. Gah. It's coming soon to the BBC and the Amstrad too, apparently, so if you own either of those, you can choose to spend money on being bored on those machines too, should you feel the need.

Now, this is something very interesting indeed. There are not many Commodore 64 games that I would say I was jealous of because the Speccy doesn't have them, but one I will

admit to is this next game which means jealousy will remain no more - it's the brilliant *Spy Vs Spy*. MAD Magazine's spy duo have finally landed on the Spectrum, and Beyond has also seemingly done a cracking job on the conversion, too. Set in a secret embassy, *Spy Vs Spy* pits you against another spy as you bid to escape the building and fly off into the sunset. You can't escape just by finding the exit - that would be *Jack Charlton's Match Fishing* level of boring - you have to navigate your way around the building, seeking out multiple items before finding said exit, whilst along the way avoiding the other spy and any traps they might have laid out for you. The game features Simulvision -

a term coined by the game's creators - which allows you to play simultaneously with the other spy (whether they are computer-controlled or controlled by another player), with the screen split in two so you can see what kind of shenanigans they're getting up to before plotting your own moves. Where the game comes into its own is in deciding and working on what strategy you want to adopt for that particular round. Do you watch the other spy go collecting all the items, beat the bejesus out of him, collect the items, and make a run for it? Do you go your own way to find and collect all the items and then dash away so quickly that he can't catch you? The possibilities are endless! Almost.

The traps, which I alluded to earlier, are really what make this game stand out. These are used to hamper the spies on their quest to escape, as in your arsenal are bombs and springs - which can be loaded into





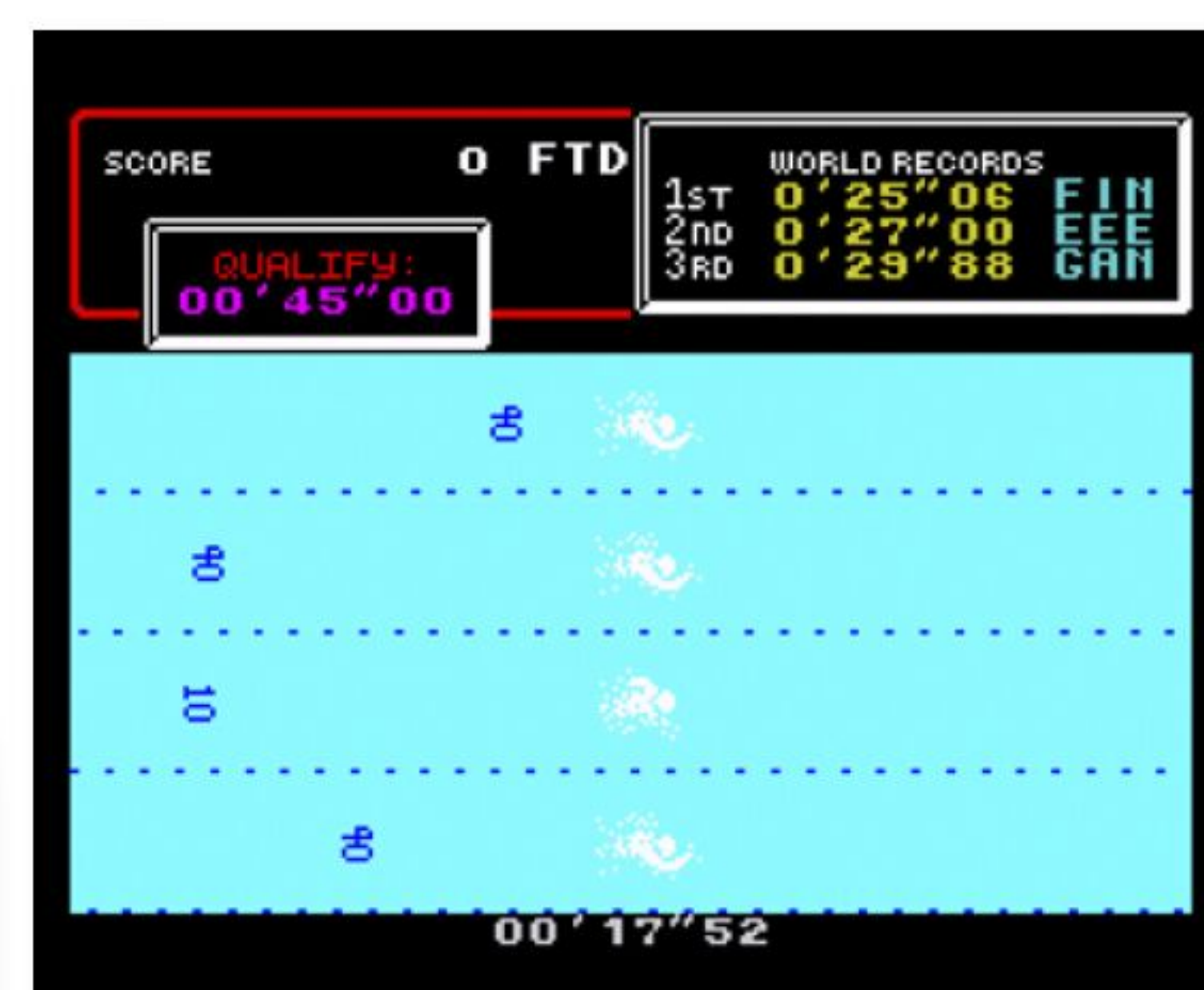
drawers and cabinets - and then guns and buckets of acid which can be used on the doors. If the Speccy version is anything like the 64 version, catching a spy with a bucket of acid is a joy to behold, with the excellent cartoon-style electrocution

mother?

Following directly on from *Spy Vs Spy* is *Hyper Sports* from Imagine. Now, this is a direct port of the popular arcade game, which means only one thing - say goodbye to your

course, I'll be picking this up as soon as I can get to the shop. My mum may wonder where I've gone when she doesn't see me for a few days, but hey, enjoy the peace, eh

so there's plenty to keep you entertained, it would seem. The game looks very colourful, and the graphics are neatly done and cartoon-like, much like what we saw with *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*, which is no bad thing of course. Another CRASH Smash to add to the list this issue, then, and another that I may have to pick up and plough a few hours into. May pick up a spare joystick whilst I'm out, too. Just in case.



Well, it seems my waffling excitement about *Spy Vs Spy* has left me with little to no room to talk about Mikro-Gen's 64K expansion. I say 'little to no room', but what I actually mean is no room. Sorry, readers. And sorry Mikro-Gen, I'm sure it's a great piece of kit and will definitely stand the test of time, providing many hours of enjoyment with those expanded games you're promising us. What could go wrong?

See you next time!



(skeleton and all) animation leaving you sniggering away like a naughty schoolboy or schoolgirl. Of course, it's a CRASH Smash, and of

joysticks! And keyboards! And possibly your sanity. The events featured include swimming, shooting, running, and gymnastics



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